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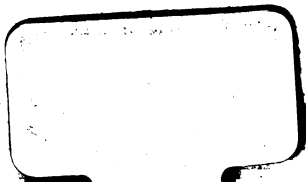
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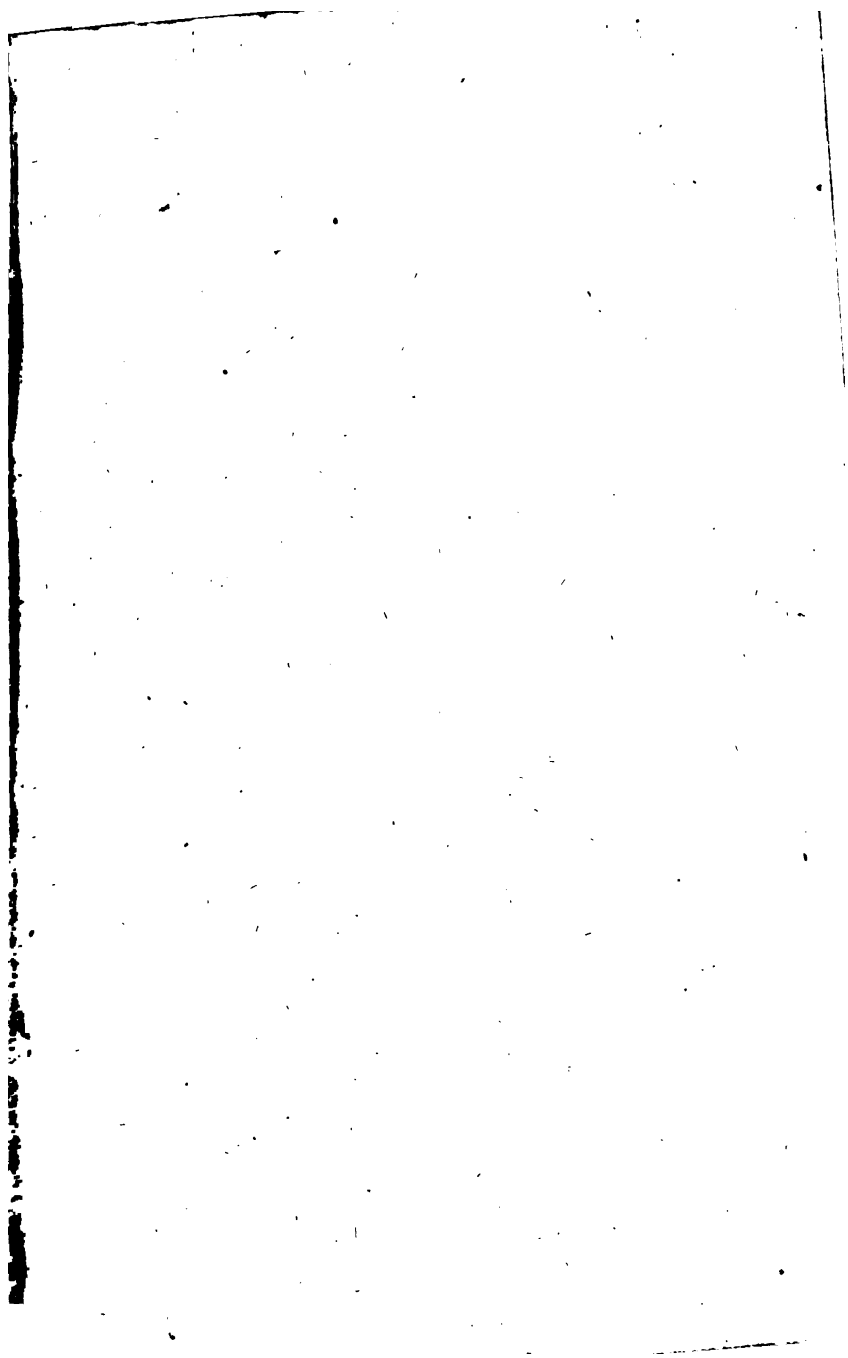


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2094 e. 59





**SKETCH**  
**OF THE**  
**PRESENT STATE OF**  
**CARACAS;**

**INCLUDING**  
**A JOURNEY**  
**FROM CARACAS THROUGH LA VICTORIA AND**  
**VALENCIA TO PUERTO CABELLO.**

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**BY ROBERT SEMPLE,**  
**AUTHOR OF TWO JOURNEYS IN SPAIN, &c. &c.**

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**LONDON:**  
**PRINTED FOR ROBERT BALDWIN, 47, PATERNOSTER-**  
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**1812**



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## PREFACE.

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**T**HE following observations on the Caracas have been prompted by the inquiries of my friends, and the knowledge of events which have taken place since my departure. During my stay in that country commercial objects chiefly engrossed my mind, and left little room except for those general features either in the natural or political world, which were too obvious to be overlooked, and too striking to be forgotten. The notes which I have preserved are few; but letters written at the time by myself, others received from my Brother, and my own recollections, have supplied the rest. I know Gray has said that "an observation fixed on the spot is worth a cart load of recollections," and nobody is more aware than myself of the truth of this remark. But the following sheets are not

composed entirely of recollections, neither are they a cart load.

I could easily have extended to a far greater length the remarks on political affairs; and felt, indeed, strongly inclined to draw the characters of some of the leading men at présent in Venezuela. Private motives, however, prevented me from doing the latter; and, with regard to the former, having alluded to the great and leading causes of all the revolutions in Spanish America, I found so wide a field open to me, that it was necessary to stop at once, or prepare to enter into discussions which, however compressed, would still be disproportionate to the rest of the work. I am a traveller, and do but sketch as I pass along, and never more so than on this occasion. I indulge the hope that the rules of criticism designed only for finished works will not be applied in all their strictness to the present performance.

I have added an appendix, containing a few documents relating to the state of

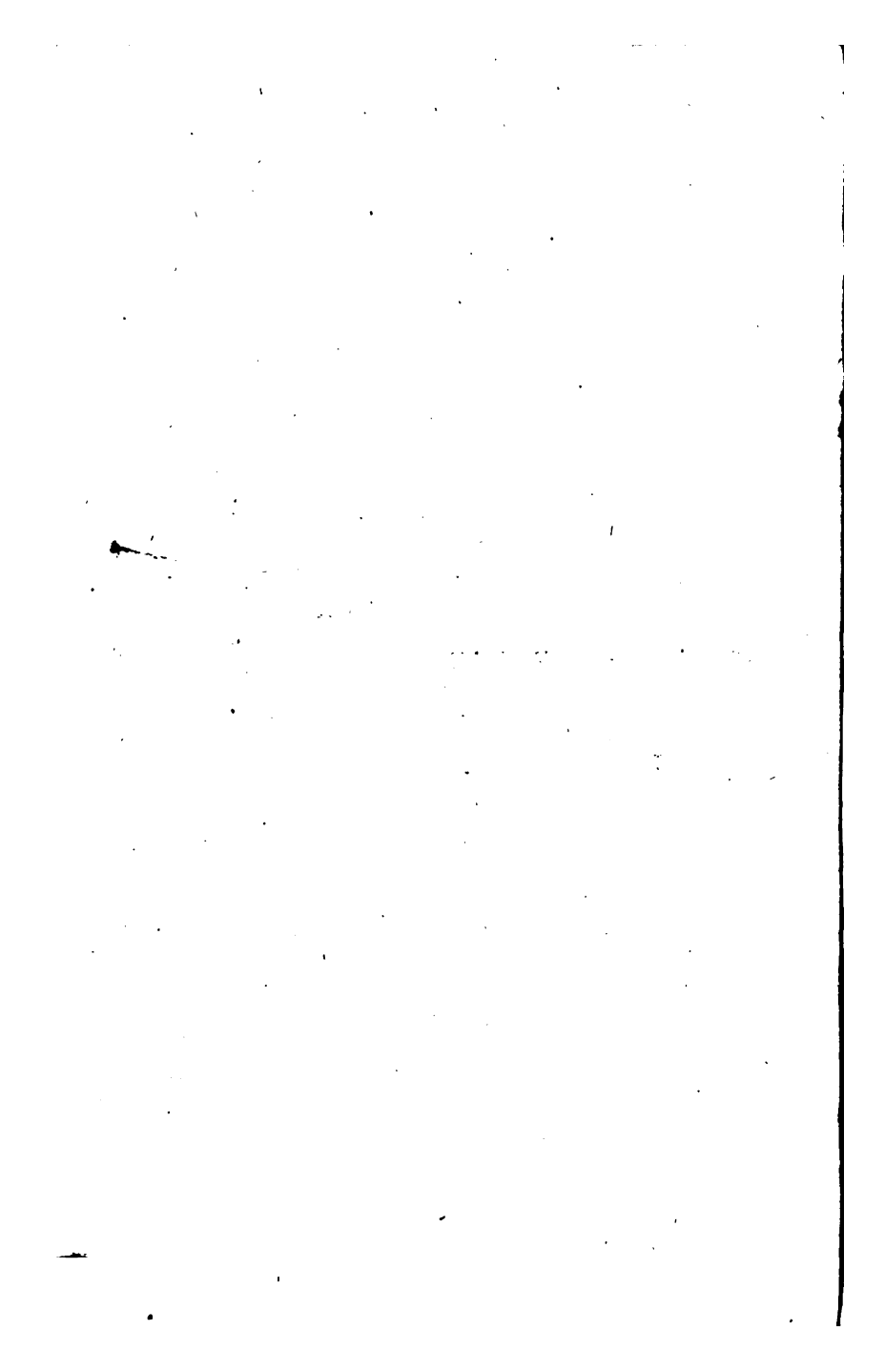
**PREFACE.**

**v**

public affairs, and illustrative of the mode of thinking, and expression, in this part of America. The collection would have been both more extensive and more interesting, but for the capture of a vessel, on board of which were many papers to my address. In spelling the word Caracas, I have adopted the orthography of the country; because I think its greater simplicity is likely, in time, to render it universally prevalent.

**ROBERT SEMPLE.**

**London, April, 1812.**



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# SKETCH

OF THE

## CARACAS.

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### CHAP. I.

#### *London to Curaçoa.*

**H**OW melancholy is the life of a sailor! From the first hour of embarkation his habits and modes of life become essentially different from those of his brethren on shore. His habitation is not fixed, and seems without foundation; now leaning to this side, now to that; acted upon by every wave and by every breath of wind. Even his food is unnatural, engenders diseases, and can be relished only through long habit. Often for months he does not behold the cheerful face of woman, nor green fields, nor cottages. So sad are the watery deserts which he traverses, that a solitary

and sterile island becomes to him an object of interest. At night he slumbers in a narrow hammock, from which, in the midst of dreams of home, he is often roused by the sound of danger. Rushing upon deck, he finds the vessel driving before the blast, or laid down upon her side by a sudden gale. The rest of the night is spent amidst cold and wet, and darkness and storms. Even the morning light is hardly welcome, since it serves only to discover a turbulent and boundless ocean, in which he may possibly ere long be overwhelmed, and no sad memorial of him remain to tell his fate.

Yet to some, how pleasant is the life of a sailor ! For ever roving about, he enjoys, without care, that variety which the Epicurean so sedulously, and often so vainly, seeks, as alone capable of giving a zest to the pleasures of existence. The fruits, the productions, the manners of distant climates, become to him as familiar as those of his own country. He sees nature under every aspect : and the widely varying races of mankind, the Chinese and the Negro, the Indian and the Malay, are brothers



with whom he has often conversed. It is the duty and the pride of a sailor to struggle with the tempest which inures his mind and body to fatigue and danger. But storms do not always vex the surface of the deep, nor do clouds always darken the face of Heaven. Favourable breezes at intervals bear him smoothly along. He sees the sun rise in all his glory from the eastern waves, and disappear in the evening as in a sea of fire. He contemplates with pleasure the tropical clouds, the rich and splendid colours of which bid defiance to the art of the painter, and awaken to admiration even the rudest mind. He alone with his level horizon can contemplate in all its magnificence the starlight canopy of Heaven, or the moon reflected on every side from a thousand broken waves. Who would not undergo a few hardships and privations to arrive at the enjoyment of objects so sublime? How pleasant is the life of a sailor!

We sailed from Gravesend on the 27th August, 1810, and anchored on the even-

ing of the 28th near the North Foreland. Having heard that several small vessels had lately been cut out from these grounds, we loaded our guns, and although so recently from London, began already to think of danger; we were in the midst of shoals and sand-banks, but all was still, whilst the light on the tower of the North Foreland threw its gleam over the smooth surface of the water. The next day, after passing the floating light off the Goodwin Sands, we anchored in the Downs, and landed the Pilot who had brought us from Gravesend. On the 30th, the vessel being still detained, I went on shore and visited the heights above Deal, from which are fine views of the Bay where Julius Cæsar landed, of Ramsgate, Broadstairs, and the white cliffs as far as the North Foreland, crowned with its beacon. Innumerable vessels were passing upwards with a fine breeze from the south-west, and opposite, the white cliffs of Calais and a long line of French Coast were visible. All round the chalk country appeared delightful, and

the corn was already generally gathered into shocks ; but to this country and all its charms I was about to bid adieu.

The evening was still. At eleven o'clock the sea was perfectly calm, and the stars were reflected as from an immense lake. The lights, which not long before glittered along the beach in the town of Deal, were now mostly extinct. The silence of the night was interrupted only by the sullen sound of the waves breaking along the pebbly shore, or the half mournful cry of sailors shortening their cables at the turn of tide. How many of them that are now singing this farewell song shall see their native country no more !

It is at such seasons, and in such situations, that the mind of the traveller is most keenly awakened to the remembrance of home and its indissoluble ties. He retires to rest ; but sleep, the friend of the disappointed and the melancholy, visits him not. He returns to the deck, and views again the pale stars, the water which reflects their light, and the dark shore, and listens once more to the rushing of the tide.

Perhaps he calls on the morning air to breathe some portion of its coolness into his bosom, and regrets that the heart of man should be for ever agitated with an ebb and flow, like the restless ocean.

But although regret and sorrow may last for a night, joy cometh in the morning. Good news ! the wind is fair, the anchor is weighed, the sails are unfurled, and the bustle, the noise, and the cheerfulness of preparation, banish the sense of a too deep regret. The bitterness of separation is past. A hundred vessels are under weigh, each striving to get before the other, and the Amelia must not be the last. An armed merchant vessel had agreed to be our consort for some days. Before mid-day we were in the open Channel ; but the wind being light, we made but little progress. Several luggers appearing in the offing, we fired off our muskets and loaded them afresh. At midnight it fell calm, and soon afterwards the tide turned against us. We were then obliged suddenly to anchor in twenty fathoms water, not far to the westward of the low point of Dungeness, the

light of which was clearly perceptible. At four o'clock the tide again became favourable, with a slight breeze, and we weighed anchor. At eight we passed the white cliffs of Beachy Head and in the evening were off the Isle of Wight. Half way between the two, there is a fine view of both these points, frequently so interesting to mariners. At night it again fell nearly calm, and the tide being against us, we made little or no progress until the morning, when a fine breeze sprang up. At mid-day, several vessels being in sight, we noticed a small black lugger between us and the land, which, after several suspicious manœuvres, boarded a small sloop bound down channel. Soon afterwards the sloop altered her course over to the coast of France, whilst the lugger tacked and stood directly towards us. As there was every appearance of her being French, we immediately shortened sail to wait for our companion, and with great bustle began to prepare for action. Sails were stretched along the quarters, the matches were lighted, the small arms were brought upon deck, and

with various emotions we waited the result. The lugger however apparently not choosing to attack two vessels supporting each other, passed astern of us, and stood away close upon the wind. Presently an English brig of war appeared in the offing, the lugger again altered her course, the brig gave chase, and our course being nearly opposite, we soon lost sight of them both.

At two o'clock we were abreast of the Bill of Portland, the form of which we could plainly distinguish, as well as the cliffs of St. Alban's Head, the first remarkable high land to the westward of the Isle of Wight. The winds, however, continued baffling and unsteady. In the evening we saw the moon now about four days old. Those only who have made a voyage know with what interest this planet is regarded at sea. A bright ornament to summer, a substantial blessing in the long nights of winter, the sailor watches its increase or its wane with constant attention. This night, however, it soon set, and left us to calm and darkness.

At the dawn of day we beheld on one

side of us the entrance of Torbay, and on the other to windward a large fleet, certainly not fewer in number than one hundred and fifty, bound down channel, and, as we conjectured, a convoy with troops destined for Portugal. Nothing could give a stronger idea of the naval security of England, than the sight of this forest of masts in mid channel; for, in reality, the body of the convoy seemed like a wood, and, even the stragglers formed a long line in the horizon. Towards the close of the day, however, it came on to blow pretty strongly, and, night approaching, we soon lost sight of them.

For two days subsequently we made very little progress, and found ourselves on the third morning only off Falmouth harbour surrounded by fishing boats; from one of which, we were plentifully supplied with ling, dories, bream, conger eels, and skait. By degrees as the fogs of the morning dispersed, we again discerned a large fleet about four miles to windward of us standing in for the land. At length, on the 6th September in the afternoon, a fine breeze

sprang up from the northward, and we set all sail. At five o'clock, we were abreast of the Lizard, a point of land of no great height, from which most vessels outward bound take their departure, and which they generally endeavour to make on their return to England. On the top are two light-houses, and from the point a long and broken ridge of rocks runs out into the sea. On both sides the coast is steep and rugged, so that should a vessel be driven ashore here, it appears as if the crew must inevitably perish. We soon left the convoy far behind us; and it was a noble sight to see nearly two hundred vessels under full sail, in a line astern of us. A frigate taking us for a runaway from the convoy, fired two guns, and made signals to us, but we were soon out of sight. The breeze continuing favourable, we waved our hats and bade England farewell. Next morning we were out of sight of land.

From this period, the winds, although sometimes very light, were almost constantly favourable. About a fortnight after our departure, the appearance of the evening



clouds broken into a thousand beautiful fragments piled upon each other, the warmth of the air, and its regular current from the north-east, all tended to shew that we were now upon the verge, if not within the influence of the trade winds. It is then that the life of a sailor becomes comparatively easy. Sometimes for weeks together the vessel sails with a steady breeze, whilst on moonlight nights we see her shadow with all her ropes, masts, and sails flying over the smooth surface of the deep. Her track as she glides through the waves is marked by a long sparkling line of pale fire, which she leaves far behind. It then becomes too warm to sleep below. The most vivid lightning plays about the horizon, and but seldom accompanied with thunder or rain; the stars shine with unclouded brilliancy, and the refreshing coolness of the night air tempts the mariner to sleep on deck under the slightest covering.

On the 8th October, thirty two days after our departure from the Lizard, we made the Island of Tobago. About sunset the man at the masthead called out

"Land a head," and soon afterwards we could discern it from deck. As the moon rose, we distinctly traced the rugged outline of the island; and before midnight were close up with it.

Early the next morning Tobago appeared about twenty miles astern of us, and we were completely in the Caribbean Sea. In a few hours we discerned Grenada to the westward of us, and Trinidad to the south. The water appeared of a dirty green, such as marks the soundings in the English Channel at forty or fifty fathoms. The islands of Grenada and Tobago are indeed connected by a bank, but we could find no bottom at sixty fathoms. This appearance of the water continued all day. At two o'clock we were abreast of Grenada, which, like Tobago, is high and mountainous, but interspersed with vallies rich with cultivation. In many spots the plantations advanced almost from the sea shore to the summits of the hills, and afforded the most charming views. Such it was by day; but at night the whole island presented an immense dark mass, crowned at the top with

pale clouds, through which, at intervals, the lightning burst, now in swift zigzags, and now in broad sheets of dazzling fire.

Since our leaving England, hitherto we had been careless of danger. We feared nothing in the broad and open sea but the enemy's privateers, and even of them we were troubled with but few apprehensions after passing the latitude of Cape Finisterre. But now we were in a more confined sea, and in a track abounding with dangers; to mention which, as a caution to others, is the principal object of this sea narrative.

After getting within the great chain of the Islands of the Antilles, which bound the Caribbean sea in the form of a semi-circle to the North and West, we meet in various parts with other chains of small islands and rocks, many of them imperfectly known and highly dangerous to navigation. One of these chains extends in nearly a straight line from westward of Grenada to the eastern point of the Gulf of Venezuela, and consists of the rocks of the Testigos, or Witnesses, the Seven Bro-

thers, and of the islands of Blanca, Orchilla, las Rocas, Aves or Birds, Buenayre, Curaçoa, and Aruba. We were aware of these dangers, and kept a good look out; yet early next morning we saw the Testigos about ten miles astern of us, and bearing in such a direction as to show that we must have passed very near them in the night. About nine o'clock we saw land, apparently very high, which we conceived to be the island of Margarita, on our larboard beam. The water had now resumed its former colour, indicating no soundings. At mid-day we saw the Seven Brothers, a cluster of tolerably high rocks; and about four o'clock passed abreast of them. They appeared entirely uninhabited; mostly steep all round; and, although very moderate weather, the sea broke against them with great violence. Soon afterwards we saw what we supposed to be Blanca, a long low island, which we mistook at first for the shadow of a cloud upon the water. From this island we took a fresh departure, and ran on all night.

At day break on the ensuing morning, we saw land at a great distance, upon the

larboard quarter in the form of a round hummock, and after every examination of our charts and journals, were much puzzled to determine what island it might be; we therefore hawled our wind and stood toward it. By twelve, we made out other islands to leeward; and, by our observation, put down the first we had seen as Orchilla; it now appearing in the form of high and broken land. In the afternoon, we saw what we conceived to be the Rocas, and steered towards them. We soon made out an island, apparently about half the size of that which we had marked as Orchilla, and, conceiving this to be the principal Roca, kept at a good distance, in order to avoid all danger of the numerous smaller rocks and shoals which extend chiefly to the south and south-east of it. The night being clear with fine moonlight for some hours, we stood on under easy sail, keeping a strict look out for Aves or Bird's Islands, a dangerous cluster in our track. We passed the night in tranquillity, but the day dawned just in time to show us that we were close upon rocks and breakers.

Immediately a great alarm arose, all hands were called, and on heaving the lead we found only three fathoms water. We plainly saw the white rocks, with dark patches of weed, beneath the vessel's bottom. Fortunately the wind, although very light, enabled us to wear round, and stand off the land with all sail set, so that by eight o'clock we were clear of danger, and had resumed our former course. It was pleasing to observe the change in the countenances of all on board at every fresh cast of the lead, as we gradually deepened the water from three to five, eight, ten, fifteen, and twenty fathoms. These rocks and small islands form a pretty numerous and extensive groupe, some above, and many under, water. At night they are very dangerous; for although there was no negligence on the part of the watch on deck, and several were on the look out, yet in ten minutes more we should have struck, and our vessel being very sharp, must soon have gone to pieces. About nine o'clock we saw what appeared as one long and low island, broken into a number of sharp hum-

mocks. This we conceived to be Buenayre, and accordingly stood towards it; but in the afternoon were greatly alarmed to discover it to be composed of several little islands and rocks, with numerous breakers, in various directions; and the sea, at no great distance a-head, shewing a long tract of very pale green. We once more put the ship about in a great hurry, and now discovered that these were the islands of Aves, and consequently that we had been mistaken in the proper names of the preceding, having in our Journal marked the isles of Rocas as those of Aves, and that of Orchilla as the Great Roca. As it soon afterwards became dark, we stood off and on all night; and at day-break saw the rocks of Aves well to windward of us. We then made sail for Buenayre; but the weather becoming dark and rainy, we did not see it until nearly mid-day. In the afternoon it cleared up, and we discovered it to be a considerable island, with high broken ground at the north, and joined to a long ridge of table land. As we neared it, we observed a point of very low land, running out far into the

sea. We imagined Buenayre and Curaçoa to be now on in one to us, and looked in vain for the opening between them. At sun-set we saw land to the westward, but thought it to be on the main; we therefore lay-to all night, off and on.

At day-break of the fourteenth we made sail, still thinking ourselves close to Curaçoa; but at length became convinced that the high land to the westward was that island, and therefore bore away directly for it. At nine o'clock we plainly discerned it to be an island, appearing like a high table land in the centre, with the land at each end low, or broken into small hillocks. By ten we found ourselves nearly abreast of Little Curaçoa; a very dangerous island or flat of about a mile and a half in length, and nearly level with the water's edge. On this an English vessel, bound to Curaçoa, had been wrecked about a twelvemonth before, when just in sight, as it were, of her harbour. A small sloop was anchored near it, and we saw several men on shore, with a small boat, apparently engaged in looking for portions of wreck. At mid-



day a fine breeze sprang up, and we soon got up with the main island of Curaçoa. The land along the shore appeared generally in small rocky heights, but rising inland to a flat summit of considerable elevation. Soon afterwards we were abreast of the Bay of Fuske, of the ancient charts, but now generally called the Bay of Caracas. The seat of Government was formerly here. It presents a romantic rocky appearance, and the sea running up, forming channels in various directions. An old fort upon the insulated point of a projecting rock has a striking effect. The entrance of the harbour of Curaçoa now became visible, as also the suburbs or houses along the beach, here called the Peter Moy. Presently the pilot came on board, and ordering us to keep close along the shore, we soon arrived at the entrance of the harbour, defended by a small fort near the water's edge, and other batteries more elevated. We then luffed up close to the wind, and, without letting go our anchor, were soon safe along-side the key, made fast by a rope to the shore.

It appears from the preceding narrative, that there is great danger in vessels bound for Curaçoa following the general custom of running along the chain of islands and rocks which have been enumerated. Within my own knowledge three vessels have been wrecked upon them; one already mentioned upon Little Curaçoa, an American upon the Isle of Aves, and a British vessel upon Orchilla, towards which she drifted in a dead calm, notwithstanding all the efforts of the crew in their boats to keep her off. As they stretch from east to west, and consequently lie all very nearly in the same latitude, the mariner, without local knowledge, when once entangled among them, cannot, from his solar observations alone, determine exactly one from another. The currents also in this sea are not only very variable, but violent also. In the course of a few dark hours a vessel is swept down upon a danger which journals and observations had concurred in placing still far distant. On these accounts, it appears to me, that it would be far preferable for vessels bound to Curaçoa to keep well

to the northward, until near Buenayre ; or otherwise at once to penetrate and keep to leeward of the whole chain, even should they see the main land of America. After making Cape Codera, or the high mountains above La Guayra, the course is simple, and the prevailing winds favourable, for Curaçoa. The same observations will apply to vessels bound to La Guayra : they should endeavour, as soon as possible, to get a sight of the continent of America, to the eastward of the island of Margarita, the passage between this island and the main being full of danger, without an experienced pilot on board. The reader, who may be anxious to get to Caracas, will pardon this journal in favour of the motive with which it was principally written. Should it be the means of saving a single vessel, or a single life, the end will be fully answered.

## CHAP. II.

*Curaçoa.—Black Soldiers.—Stalactical Cavern.—View of the Main Land.—Voyage to La Guayra.—La Guayra.*

**THE** island of Curaçoa is situated in  $69^{\circ} 26'$  west longitude, and  $12^{\circ}$  north latitude, extending in its general direction from N. W. to S. E. about forty miles. The hills are of moderate height, and the low land in most parts near the coast seems formed of a coral rock, on the surface of which a vegetable mould is thinly scattered. The harbour on the south-west side is formed by a deep inlet of the sea, capable of admitting the largest vessels almost close to the shore; narrow at the entrance, and widening afterwards into a kind of small lake, interspersed with shoals. At the head of this lagoon, but rather on the eastern side, is a steep hill, on the top of which is placed Fort St. George, the guns of which command the whole harbour. The town is principally on the eastern side

of the entrance, stretching from that along the sea beach, and some of the branches of the lagoon. There is a constant communication from side to side in small flat boats, which ply incessantly. The residence of the Governor is on the right of the entrance, and near the water's edge. Here are also the principal batteries, which defend the harbour. The streets are in general narrow and dirty; nor is there a single private house which can be called elegant.

This island formerly belonged to the Spaniards; and, when taken by the Dutch, was finally ceded by the former, probably on account of its extreme insignificance, when compared with the immense countries which they still retained. It has now been for some years, for the second time, in the possession of the English; and the nature of the population is such as might be expected from this successive change of masters, joined to its situation with respect to the continent of America. I was agreeably surprized at several plantations not immediately in the vicinity of the

town, to hear Dutch spoken by the masters and slaves as at the Cape of Good Hope. But in the town the jargon is complete, and betrays the mixture of the various races from which it sprang. No two languages can be conceived more dissonant than Spanish and Dutch; one the loftiest and most sonorous, the other the meanest of the dialects of modern Europe! These form the basis of this strange compound, which is farther enriched with corruptions of English and French, and of words imported by African Negroes, or originating among the Creoles themselves. Spanish and French are spoken by the better classes, but in all common occurrences this *pape-miento*, as it is called, forms the language of conversation among the lower ranks of colonists in the town.

Curacao being little more than forty or forty-five miles from the nearest part of the main land, is well situated for intercourse with the whole of the neighbouring coast, and as such, in my opinion, will always remain of importance in a commercial point of view. It was imagined that the decla-

ration of independence by the province of Venezuela, by opening the ports of the continent to a direct trade, would operate to the disadvantage of Curaçoa, or rather supersede the necessity of such a depôt altogether. This may no doubt be true in some degree; but recent occurrences have shown that no advantages of soil or situation can recompence the want of a stable and efficient government, and the consequent insecurity of life and property. Whatever property may be adventured to Curaçoa, is at least safe so long as British laws and British power protect it. But no sooner do we pass those strongly marked boundaries, than we tread on unstable ground, and unfortunately those who have considered the subject most attentively, are the most doubtful as to the result.

Curaçoa as a West India Island may be reckoned healthy; those destructive fevers which are so prevalent among the Antilles, being here but little known, even upon the low situations near the coast. This I think may be attributed partly to the moderate height of the hills in a great part of the

island over which the winds blow with few interruptions, and partly to the general nature of the soil, the basis of which is a spongy and frequently a calcareous rock, which speedily absorbs all moisture. The wind blows for some hours almost every day with great freshness from the sea, and agitates the waters of the lagoon, which might otherwise stagnate and become a fruitful source of disease. A number of little creeks and bays here afford also bathing places free from the dread of sharks, which do not penetrate into the lagoon, although they are often seen close to the shore, near the entrance.

The regular defence of the island was at this time entrusted almost entirely to a black regiment, the eighth West Indian, which had been stationed here upwards of six months. I saw it under arms, and was struck by its steadiness and appearance; at the same time, that a long line of black faces, in the English military dress, produced a singular effect. Previous to its arrival the inhabitants were in the utmost dread of such defenders, and witnessed the



## CURAÇOA.

departure of the last European battalion with the most gloomy forebodings. Such, however, had been the discipline and good conduct of these black soldiers, as to form a striking and most favourable contrast with their predecessors. Robberies, quarrels, and drunkenness were far less frequent than before, and the inhabitants, instead of apprehension and mistrust, were becoming inclined to regard them as the most peaceable regiment they had yet seen. The remembrance of the horrors of St. Domingo, however, still haunts the mind of every colonist of the West Indies. Twenty thousand Frenchmen, scattered in all directions from that island, have spread universally the melancholy tale of their sufferings, and the apprehensions of a similar fate. In the hurry of alarm, and in the midst of prejudice, the atrocities committed at St. Domingo are attributed to the negroes, merely because they were black men, and not because they were ignorant slaves, suddenly made free. It is forgotten that colour has nothing to do with the question, and that atrocities at

least equal, and proceeding from the very same source, were committed at Paris, Nantz, Lyons, and Toulon. To a person fresh from Europe, these apprehensions, and this repugnance to black men, appears the more striking, as he often looks in vain, amidst a motley crowd, for a single countenance in which traces of a mixture of Negro descent are not visible.

The general inequalities of the face of the country are such as to render the exercise of riding agreeably diversified, without being fatiguing. In some quarters deer abound, and parties are frequently made from the town for the purpose of shooting them. The most striking natural curiosity usually shewn to strangers is a stalactical cavern, at the distance of about two hours moderate ride from town, and which I visited. The road is excellent, and bordered for the most part with hedges of aloes and different species of euphorbium. In coming to the open country, we notice several groupes of manchineel trees adorned with beautiful but poisonous fruit, and under the shade of which it is almost death to sleep. We

carefully avoided touching them in passing, lest some drops of moisture should be shaken from the leaves upon the skin, which almost immediately cause heat and pain ; and if they fall into the eye, may seriously injure that organ. At length we arrive at broken ground, and turn a rocky ridge, in the perpendicular face of which is the entrance of the cavern. A neighbouring garden, the house belonging to which appears now almost deserted, although once in the most splendid Dutch taste, afforded shade to ourselves and our horses. We climbed up by a narrow and rugged path to the mouth of the cave, preceded by Negroes with split canes to serve as torches, and found the roof and the sides already blackened with the smoke of former visitors. The entrance is narrow, but the cavern widens as we proceed, and at length rises in several parts into natural irregular vaults and domes. In the centre of one of the largest of these, is an opening upwards to the light, through which it is said, that animals, and even men, have been precipitated and lost. After stumbling through

gloomy passages, assisted only by the glare of torches, the effect produced, when we arrive at this dome, by a long stream of pure light, shooting down into the gloom, is singularly pleasing. Upon the whole, however, this cavern is, in my opinion, by no means to be compared with that of St. Michael at Gibraltar, which, in the grandeur of its first opening, the height and thickness of its enormous stalactical pillars, and the depth and variety of its hitherto untraced windings, is far more interesting to the general observer. I was informed, however, that Baron Humboldt had viewed this cavern with great attention, and ascribed to it a very high degree of natural interest, from which I infer either that he had never visited the cave of St. Michael, or that he had here seen more than my limited knowledge of natural history permitted me to discover.

The sea shore which was at a little distance below the garden where we reposed, interested me fully as much as the cave which we had come to examine. For two or three hundred yards before reaching the sea, we

climbover bare honey-combed rocks, wholly devoid of vegetation, and the crevices of which being filled with salt water, indicates to us the amazing rise of the sea in tempestuous weather. It being now calm, I advanced to the edge of the rocks, and saw about ten feet beneath me a clear depth of water, which would enable a first rate ship of war to touch the very spot on which I stood. Such appeared to be the nature of this iron bound coast, as far as the eye could reach on either side. Even calm as it was, the sea in many parts rose with a sudden and unaccountable swell against this rocky wall, and dashed its spray with a thundering noise high into the air. Having sufficiently viewed this sublime but somewhat desolate spectacle, I joined my companions beneath the shade of their orange and lime trees, where they lay reposed: To our cold provisions were added fruit from the surrounding trees, and wine cooled in a little stream which ran near us. When the heat of the day had abated, we mounted our horses, and reached town when the stars had already begun to appear.

Several lofty portions of the main land of America are visible from Curaçoa, from which it is distant, as has been observed, little more than forty miles. The most striking is Cape St. Anne near Coro; and the whole affords an interesting spectacle, either when clear and appearing like a ridge of mountainous islands; or when capped with clouds, from which the lightning continually bursts. Even to the casual observer, the sight is interesting; but infinitely more so to him who has formed a thousand romantic ideas of that wonderful continent, and is hourly expecting an opportunity of transporting himself to it.

After about a fortnight's residence at Curaçoa a schooner offered for La Guayra, in which I embarked. We sailed in the afternoon of the 1st November, with a fresh breeze, and stood close hawled on the starboard tack all night. At six o'clock next morning we were so close over on the main as to discern the breakers, on a long ledge of rocks called the Keys, when we tacked, and at sun set were close under the island of Buenayre, having also a view

of the Table Land of Curaçoa, to leeward. This island is mountainous, and apparently more agreeably diversified than Curaçoa, but inhabited only by Indians, and a very few Europeans. A Governor has his residence here, and reigns absolute monarch over this little kingdom, which produces nothing except a few cattle, goats, large quantities of poultry, and of late years, a considerable quantity of salt. At sun-set we again tacked, and all night stood over towards the main land, which, however, we could not distinguish at day-break, on account of thick mists. About eleven o'clock we saw very high land, which our Captain knew to be near the entrance of Puerto Cabello, when we again tacked and stood off. At length, on the morning of the fourth day after leaving Curaçoa, we saw Cape Blanco, the white tower of the church of Macuta, and La Guayra placed at the foot of lofty mountains, which rose behind it with an almost perpendicular ascent. At mid-day the breeze failed us before we had got under the guns of the batteries, at which time we discovered to

windward a vessel of warlike appearance, bearing right down toward us. This alarmed us not a little, fearing it might be a Spanish ship of war appointed to blockade La Guayra; but on nearer approach we discovered it to be an English merchantman, and, as we afterwards found, from Trinidad. At 2 o'clock we had anchored, when the health boat came along side, and after the usual questions we were conveyed ashore, and for the first time I placed my foot on Spanish America. Senor Escalona, the Commandant of La Guayra, being absent, we were carried before his deputy, an ignorant and weak man, at the first glance, and which was not belied by subsequent acquaintance. His foolish self-importance in examining us was laughable, displaying all the weakness of an upstart suddenly raised to office. He insisted upon seeing some of our original English passports; and, when told that we had none, neither were they ever used at home, he gravely told us, that whatever it might have been, no Englishman hereafter should leave England without a passport. This beha-



viour was the more striking, as forming a contrast to the character of Escalona, whose knowledge and urbanity place him in the first rank of the talents of this country. Our examination being finished, we were released from the soldiers who had hitherto attended us, and repaired to a miserable Posada, or inn, which, however, was the only one in the place, where we found shelter for the night.

The population of La Guayra is reckoned about eight thousand, of all colours. Of these comparatively few are Europeans, or even white Creoles, by far the greater proportion being people of colour. The town is irregularly and badly built, the lower street in a line parallel to the beach, and most of the others stretching up the steep side of the mountain, at the foot of which the town is built, and along the high banks of a ravine in which flows a small stream. After heavy rains this becomes for a short time an impassable torrent, and has sometimes even overflowed its lofty banks, to the great danger of the lower part of the town, as is testified by an inscription on

a large stone inserted in a house whither it was carried by the water. The only public building of any consequence is the custom house, which stands a little within the water gate, and is large and commodious. This is necessary, as every package imported or shipped must be brought here for examination. They do not rely, as in England or the United States, upon the oaths of the merchants, but open every package, and appreciate the value according to which the duties are to be paid. This, however, is done with politeness, and generally with lenity. The church of La Guayra has in it nothing remarkable, nor is there indeed in the whole place an object worthy of detaining the traveller a single hour. A line wall, close to the sea, and flanked by bastions, forms the defence on that side; and on several of the heights above the town are forts and batteries, which from their elevation command the whole anchorage; and, if in proper order, and well manned, must render all attacks by sea dangerous, if not impracticable. The port itself is a mere roadstead, open to the North and East,

and slightly sheltered to the West by Cape Blanco, which forms a small curve, and is so called from the light colour of its rocks. But for this small cape, La Guayra could have no pretensions whatever to be called a port, and even with it these pretensions are very slight. Vessels anchor in from six and seven to five-and-twenty and thirty fathoms, according to their distance from shore, with a bottom generally of white sand, in which anchors quickly settle. The worm is very destructive to the bottoms of such vessels as are not coppered; and there is almost constantly a swell, which is sometimes so violent as to prevent all intercourse with the shore for several days together. It is a singular spectacle when the air is perfectly calm, to see upon the beach a continued line of high breakers, which succeed each other incessantly, and descend with a roaring which is heard far up the vallies. On account of this surf the wharf of La Guayra, which is of wood, and upwards of one hundred and sixty feet in length, stands in need of continual repairs.

It is at the end of this wharf, on his very first landing, and, indeed, when he cannot yet be said to touch the shore, that the stranger sees a proof of the liberality with which nature has in these climates provided food for man, both in the ocean and on the land. He sees men who throw out their lines armed with a bare hook which they draw in with repeated jerks. After several trials, perhaps at the very first, a small fish is brought up, transfixed with the point of the hook, to which it is speedily and more securely fastened, and then again thrown further out into the water. This living bait is irresistible. In a very short time a larger fish, seldom weighing less than three or four pounds, is dragged through a shoal of smaller ones, which lately fled before him, and the fisherman has soon gained another day's subsistence for himself and his family. The heat at La Guayra is generally violent, but at this season it was far from being so oppressive as I had been taught to expect. The air was refreshed with regular breezes from the sea, and the nights were fully as cool as in the open island of Cu-

raça. Owing to this comparative coolness no epidemic diseases prevailed; and, during the five months that I remained in this country, La Guayra might vie with any settlement in the West Indies, in point of healthiness. It is far otherwise in the summer months. The heat reflected from the hills is then to Europeans almost intolerable; and the fever makes dreadful ravages among those who have not been long inured to the climate.

Owing to these causes, I staid no longer in La Guayra than my business absolutely required. As the use of carriages for the transportation of goods is here unknown, all bulky packages imported for Caracas must be divided into smaller portions, to admit of being carried on the backs of mules. This repacking is troublesome, and might be attended with great risk of loss to the merchants, if the carriers, who are in general possessed of some property, were not answerable by law for any deficiencies. Each mule carries on an average about one hundred and eighty pounds weight, although a load of two hundred weight is very common. Indigo and cotton are

made up in parcels of one hundred Spanish pounds, packed in skins, when they are called serons, and weigh, upon an average, more than an English hundred weight. Two of these, balancing each other, are very commonly the load of a mule, the charge for which, from La Guayra to Caracas, varies from a dollar to a dollar and a half. The packages are fastened on the backs of the mules by thongs of raw hide, which draw the girths so tight as to appear to a stranger likely to interrupt the breathing of the animal, although nothing can exceed the adroitness of the muleteers in adjusting the loads. When all is arranged, the mules set off, following each other in a long line; after which, a very little attention on the part of the muleteers is sufficient to preserve the whole in good order.

The traveller, just landed, is treated in much the same manner as a bale of goods. He is placed upon a mule with a clumsy and inconvenient kind of Moorish saddle and stirrups, such as are used in Spain, and his spurs, his whip, and his patience, are generally all of service to him before reaching Caracas.

## CHAP. III.

*Macuta.—Road to Caracas.—La Venta.—  
Fort on the summit.—Descent to the Val-  
ley of Caracas.—The Town.—Its Situa-  
tion.—Inhabitants, &c.*

I HEARD much of the badness of the road between La Guayra and Caracas, and even that it was trusted to as a defence to the capital, in a military point of view. In order to examine it more closely, and be the better able to appreciate the nature of such a defence, I determined to go to Caracas on foot. Such a thing had never before been heard of in a European of any respectability, in consequence of which I suppose it was that I was stopped at the gate. My Mulatto guide, among other articles, carried a portfolio containing some drawings after Morland, which seemed to give great alarm to the sable-coloured officer on guard. He in consequence ordered me to stop, until the portfolio had been submitted to the inspection of the

Commandant, who happened to be in La Guayra; and immediately sent word that I might proceed. For about a mile the road continues along the shore until we reach Macuta, a neat and pleasant village, also close upon the sea, where most of the richer inhabitants of La Guayra have houses: Here the mountains recede a little from the shore, and leave a small opening, certainly better adapted for the situation of the port than the rude spot on which it has been built. I have little doubt that Macuta will one day surpass La Guayra in size, as it now does in neatness and regularity.

Having passed through Macuta, the road turns to the left, and we immediately begin to ascend. The soil is at first a deep clay, or a rich mould, and so continues to a considerable height; the road is therefore paved in many parts, without which it would, in rainy weather, be wholly impassable. In the steepest parts it ascends by zigzags; but sometimes it is so narrow, that two loaded mules cannot pass each other; and the banks are high and steep on each side. Woe betide the traveller,



who in these passes meets a line of mules loaded with planks, which stretch transversely almost from side to side. He must either turn about his horse's head, or pass them with the utmost caution, at the risk of having his ribs encountered by a long succession of rough boards, which at every swerve of the mules scoop out long grooves in the clayey banks.

We continue constantly to ascend, On the road was the stone body of the statue of a saint on a miserable low sledge, which had been with great difficulty brought thus far, when the project seemed to have been abandoned in despair, as it continued here for several months. The head, we were informed, had already reached Caracas, where it was impatiently waiting the arrival of the body to be joined to it, and reared on high as an object of veneration to surrounding multitudes. The stoppage of this statue marked the increasing difficulties of the ascent. From clay, the road changes in many parts to rugged rock which appears not merely to have been thus purposely left, but to have been formed into its present state. At the height of about a thousand

feet, we begin to breathe already a lighter and cooler air; and, turning back, enjoy the view of Macuta and the coast beneath our feet. We see the white breakers along the shore, and hear their noise, which now sounds like a hollow murmur among the woods which begin to crown the steeps. Opposite to us is a high and steep hill, covered with vegetation, and all the deep hollow between is dark with trees. Here and there spots are cleared away, plantations are formed, and the experienced eye can distinguish the various hues of the fields of coffee, sugar, or maize. We pass also from time to time two or three miserable huts, where the muleteers are accustomed to stop and refresh themselves. In this manner we continue to ascend, the mountains still rising steep before us, till we arrive at a draw-bridge over a deep cut made across the narrow ridge upon which we have been advancing. On each side are deep valleys, clothed with tall trees and thick underwood, through which there is no path. This point is defended by two or three guns and a few soldiers, and forms the first military obstacle to the march of an enemy. In its

present state it is by no means formidable, but a very little care might render it so. Having passed this, the steepness increases, so that the mules, and even the foot traveller, can only proceed by crossing obliquely from side to side; and even that is attended with difficulty after rain or heavy dews, on account of the smooth round stones with which the road is paved. But the great and enlivening change experienced in the state of the atmosphere removes all difficulties. Never within the tropics, had I before breathed so pure and so cool an air. Instead of the stifling heat of the coast, where the slightest exertion was attended with profuse perspiration, I walked fast for joy, and thought myself in England. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when I left La Guayra, and it was now become dark when I reached La Venta, or the inn, a poor house, but well known upon the road as being about half way between Caracas and the Port. It is situated at the height of about 3600 English feet above the level of the sea, at which elevation the heat is never oppressive. Here, having supped and drank

large draughts of delicious cold water, I repaired to sleep, unmolested by heat or musquitoes. Being still warm with my walk and my supper, I cared little that the frame on which I lay down was unprovided with a single article of covering; but, about midnight I awoke, shivering with cold, and astonished at a sensation so unexpected. At three o'clock, being a fine moonlight morning, we resumed our journey, having still a considerable distance to ascend, although the worst of the road was now past. In an hour we had passed the highest point of the road, and proceeded along an uneven ridge of two or three miles before beginning to descend towards the valley of Caracas. On the summit of the highest hill above the road is a fort, which completes the military defences on the side of La Guayra. This fort is only visible from certain points somewhat distant, as we wind close round the base of the hill on which it stands, without seeing any vestiges of it. When we had passed the ridge, and were descending towards Caracas, the day began to dawn. Never had I seen a more inte-

resting prospect. A valley, upwards of twenty miles in length, inclosed by lofty mountains, unfolded itself by degrees to my eyes. A small river, which ran through the whole length of it was marked by a line of mist along the bottom of the valley; while the large white clouds, which here and there lingered on the sides of the hills, began to be tinged with the first beams of light. Beneath my feet was the town of Caracas, although only its church towers were visible, rising above the light mist in which it lay buried. Presently the bells began to chime, and I heard all their changes distinctly, although following the windings of the road I had still four miles to descend, whilst in a straight line the distance did not appear more than one. At the foot of the hill is a gate, where a guard and officers are stationed, to examine the permits for merchandize, and sometimes the passports of strangers. Within this is an open space before reaching the town, which we entered about six o'clock. After passing the first rows of houses, I was struck with the neatness and regularity

of most of the streets, which were well paved, and far superior to any thing I had yet seen in the West Indies. In the principal Posada, or inn, kept by a Genoese, I found every accommodation that could be here reasonably expected; and indeed for some days the constant sensation of refreshing coolness in the mornings and evenings, as well as throughout the night, was of itself a luxury which seemed to have all the charms of novelty, and left no room for petty complaints.

Santiago de Leon de Caracas, the capital of the whole Captain Generalship of Caracas, is situated in long.  $66^{\circ} 46'$  west, and lat.  $10^{\circ} 30'$  north, at an elevation of nearly 2000 feet above the level of the sea. The valley towards the head of which it is placed extends nearly east and west more than twenty miles, and varies in breadth from four to six or seven. It narrows towards the west, where it is almost entirely shut in by hills, which along the south side of the valley rise by gradations above each other. Those on the north side, on the contrary, form one bold and continued

range, separating the valley from the coast, and rising at one point, called the Peak of La Billa, or the Saddle, to a height of more than eight thousand four hundred English feet above the level of the sea. It is close at the foot of this northern side that the town is placed. The ground on which it stands slopes regularly down to the Guayra, a small river which bounds it on the south, and with which three other streams afterwards unite and run through the whole valley, in one channel. Although called a river, it would, in North America, be considered as no more than a brook, being every where fordable near the town, except after heavy rains, when it runs with great rapidity, but subsides almost as suddenly as it rises. Of the three streams which join the Guayra, the Catucho is the most useful to the inhabitants, as from it they derive the principal supply of water for the public fountains, of which there are several, as also for private houses, many of which are furnished with pipes and reservoirs. Besides its inclination to the south, the ground slopes also to the east,

and is consequently, upon the whole, extremely well calculated for contributing to the health and convenience of a large town. After a heavy shower of rain every street pours a muddy torrent into the Guayra, or the Anauco; but in a few minutes all is again dry, and we find the whole town suddenly rendered cleaner than could be effected by the utmost labour in any other not similarly situated.

The streets are in general about a hundred yards apart, and as they intersect each other at right angles, the whole town is by this means divided into square portions, called Quadras. When one of these is left unoccupied by houses, there remains of course a Plaza, or open square, occupying the same space as the Quadra. This construction is abundantly simple, and is perhaps the best that can be adopted for a large town, where the nature of the ground admits of it. It is upon a similar plan that Philadelphia is built; but the want of open squares renders that otherwise beautiful city somewhat too dull and uniform.

There are several squares in Caracas;



but none of them worthy of notice, except the Plaza Mayor, or great square, where the market for fruits, vegetables, fish, and other smaller articles, is held. The east side is principally occupied by the cathedral, the south by the college, and the west by the public prison. Within these is, as it were, another square, formed principally by ranges of low shops, which, however convenient in a commercial point of view, entirely disfigure the whole. The principal fountain discharges itself in the middle of the north side. In this square may be seen the fruits which we have been accustomed to consider as peculiar to very different climates, all brought from the distance of a few leagues. The banana, the pine apple, and the sapadillo, are mingled with the apple, the pear, and the chestnut. The potatoe and the plantain, fresh provisions which seem to belong to the temperate zones, and those kinds of fish which are peculiar to tropical seas, are here offered for sale on the same spot. It has been observed of the United States of North America, that, in the different states

of society, they present, in the succession of space, what seems to belong only to different periods of time. Here, on the contrary, it may be observed that, in ascending from the shore of the ocean to these elevated and temperate regions, we experience in a short lapse of time what seems to belong only to long intervals of space; and pass in a few hours from the torrid to the finest climates of the temperate zones.

The Cathedral of Caracas is heavily built, and the interior construction is badly planned; as, during the celebration of mass, a great proportion of the number of people which the church is capable of holding cannot see the priest; a most essential point where the ceremony constitutes so essential a part of the devotion. The length of the cathedral is about ninety yards, by twenty seven in breadth. It is supported by twenty four pillars, without beauty or proportion; but its brick steeple contains the only public clock in the town, and may thus compensate by its utility for what it wants in elegance.

Next in point of importance, and superior in the richness of its ornaments, is the parochial church of Alta Gracia, which was built chiefly at the expence of people of colour, and to which they seem to have contributed through emulation. It is by far the most splendid church in Caracas, and does some honour to the zeal of the contributors, if not to the taste of the architects, or of those who had the direction of its ornamenting.

The church of La Candelaria gives name to the quarter of the town in which it stands, and was built by the settlers from the Canaries, called here Islenos, or Islanders. Besides these, there are two other parish churches, St. Rosalia and St. Paul; three monasteries for friars; two nunneries, and three hospitals, of which one is for lepers alone.

The population of Caracas is upwards of forty thousand, of which about one third are whites. Among the remainder are a very few Indians; but the mixture of Indian blood is general. Almost all the handicrafts are carried on by freed-men of co-

lour, who are in general ingenious, but indolent and indifferent to the highest degree. They promise, without the smallest intention of performing, and appear perfectly unmoved when reproached with their falsehood. But indifference on this score is not peculiar to this class alone.

The College is the only public institution for education ; and hither all the youth of Caracas of the better classes are sent for that purpose. The routine of education is such, as it may be supposed to have been in Spain, two hundred years ago : a few common Latin authors, catechisms, and the Lives of Saints, being the chief studies. A free mode of thinking is, however, rapidly spreading among the young men, and may hereafter produce the most important effects.

The barracks, which stand above the town to the north-west, are large and commodious. They are of a square form, capable of holding two thousand men with ease ; and, from their situation, might completely command the town, were they not overlooked by neighbouring heights. The

view from them is extensive, over a great part of the valley, and a delightful promenade might be formed in front of them, with very little trouble and expence.

No part of Venezuela was so obstinately contested by the Indians with the original adventurers in this part of South America, as the valley of Caracas. The number of its tribes, and their high reputation for valour and intelligence, seem for a time to have deterred the Spaniards from making any attacks upon a country, the fertility of which had, however, greatly excited their cupidity. The first attempts were made from the island of Margarita, and repeatedly failed. At length a greater force was collected, the city of Valencia was built as a point from which to proceed, and the attack was made on the side of the valleys of Aragoa and the mountains of St. Pedro. After several desperate actions, in which the discipline and the fire-arms of the Spaniards uniformly prevailed, the unfortunate Indians were dispersed, and the former penetrated to the valley of Caracas. Here they erected the small village of San Fran-

cisco, on the site of which the town of Caracas now stands. This last was begun in 1567; but ten years afterwards, the inhabitants were still engaged in wars with the natives of the valley. The history of these expeditions, from their commencement, is not without interest, although too long to be here inserted. The name of Guaycaipuro, a gallant Cacique, is still remembered in these valleys, and I have heard his name pronounced by Indians with enthusiasm. When every other means had failed, he ordered the forests to be set on fire; thus displaying a desperate and sublime, but ineffectual resistance.

For a long time, Coro was the principal town in the province, until, by degrees, the superior advantages of soil and climate gave Caracas a decided superiority, notwithstanding its inland situation. In 1636 the Archbishopric of Venezuela was transferred from the sandy shores of Coro, to the delightful valley of Caracas, by the flight of the Dean and Chapter; their Prelate having given them the example many years before. It was not, however, until 1693, that this

transfer was finally ratified by the Spanish Government. The inhabitants of Coro protested in vain against this desertion of their Pastor. The pious father, as far as regarded his own convenience, had good sense and power on his side; but justice was certainly on the side of the complainants. The effects of this transaction, however, are still felt, and a deadly animosity exists between the two cities, for which I fear much blood will yet be shed.

The elevated situation of the valley of Caracas, and the purity and lightness of the air, have a material effect upon the physical and moral character of the inhabitants, and distinguish them advantageously from the natives of the coast. As the original Indians here were celebrated among the surrounding tribes, the same may be affirmed of the present race of Caracas, that they are superior in quickness of perception, in activity and intelligence, to the inhabitants of most of the other towns in the province. But the great want of a solid education, and the blind subjection to an ignorant priesthood,

render all these natural advantages of small avail. That high Spanish sense of honour which reigns in some breasts, is, in too many others, supplanted by a mere blustering appearance, which ends only in falsehood and deceit. Even this hollowness is not always covered by mild manners, or a plausible exterior, and high examples may be seen of great rudeness, joined to great insincerity. I shall not here speak of the political or general sentiments of the people of Venezuela. That is a topic worthy of being treated separately, and involves in it many extensive and important considerations, not only respecting this, but other countries; not only for the present, but for distant periods of time.

It remains here to speak of the women of Caracas. In them perhaps the Spanish character appears with less alteration than among the men; and their dress and manners are exact counterparts of what we see in Old Spain. Here, as in Spain, their principal morning occupation seems to be going to mass, dressed in black, with their mantillas over their heads, their feet par-



ticularly ornamented with silk stockings, and flirting their fans which they keep constantly in motion. On this occasion, a female slave, frequently more beautiful than her mistress, follows her, carrying a small carpet on which she may kneel at her devotions. This carpet is a great mark of distinction, and is only allowed in the churches to white women; on which account, perhaps, they are particularly proud of having it thus borne in procession, at a slow pace, through the streets. It is in contemplation, however, to abolish the restriction; and, as a beginning, during my stay, special leave was granted by a public ordinance, to the women of a coloured family in a distant town to make use of these carpets. This innovation, slight as it may appear, excited great dissatisfaction among the higher classes of Caracas, and a proportionate eagerness and hope of change among the coloured families. It is a delicate question how far the characteristics of rank should be carried in a well ordered society; but when nature has made obvious distinctions, and those distinctions have

been acted upon for centuries, a new legislator should touch them with a trembling hand. Whether these rights have been since any farther extended, I have not learnt.

Upon the whole, the women of Caracas are handsome, sprightly, and pleasing. To their natural charms they know how to add the attractions of dress, and of graceful motions. They are uniformly kind and affable in their manners; and whatever faults an Englishman may frequently observe in their domestic conduct, these are not more than may be traced in the manners of Old Spain.

There is a tolerably large theatre in Caracas, but it is poorly ornamented, and seldom well filled. The actors are taken from the lower ranks, who pursue their several occupations through the day, and in the evening tread the stage. Considering this circumstance, their performance is entitled to be treated with lenity, and, in general, the audience are not difficult to please. Patriotic songs are occasionally brought forward, and the singer is frequently not only applauded, but rewarded

with pieces of money cast upon the stage. This circumstance is sometimes attended with inconvenience; and I have seen a hero obliged to stoop to avoid a friendly dollar thrown at his head. The other principal amusements are billiards, cards, and music. In this last the people of Caracas have an excellent taste, and are making a rapid progress, although it has not been extensively cultivated among them, until within these last twenty-five years. I much doubt whether in any city of the Anglo-American States, this delightful science has arrived to nearly the same perfection as here. To this the religion of the country has greatly contributed, as both solemn and sprightly music are daily employed in aid of its rites. Indeed, in Roman Catholic countries, the ceremonies of religion, as they are generally practised, may well be ranked among the amusements of the people, or rather they form the very first class. Cards and billiards occupy only a few; but gilded images, carried about in procession; churches adorned with vessels of gold and silver, and dazzling with lights; streets

illuminated; the firing of guns and the ringing of bells; all these united form, indeed, a brilliant show, which interests all ranks, from the ancient Spaniard down to the negro imported yesterday. In vain would reason propose the sincere and humble worship of the heart as more acceptable to Heaven than all this pageantry. It will be found almost universally that man seeks to please himself in his mode of worshipping God; and frequently thinks himself most devout when he is most gratifying some hidden feeling, wholly unconnected with the professed object of his veneration. To those who require no temple built with hands, no vested priests, no smoke of incense, no solemn sounds of organs, to excite their devotion, the valley of Caracas affords an ample field for meditation or piety. To be so far above the level of the sea, and yet to behold mountains above us towering to the clouds, to see this grand valley in the evening, or at the dawn of day, when diversified by a thousand lights and shades; or under the mild light of the moon; or when a magnificent

dome studded thick with stars seems to rest on the summits of the mountains round; then it is that nature speaks directly to our hearts, and all human edifices, with their little pomp and splendour, are entirely forgotten, or remembered only to be despised.

## CHAP. IV.

*Journey from Caracas to La Victoria.*

**THE** Captain Generalship of Caracas extends from Cape de la Vela on the west to that of Paria on the east, and includes Maracaybo, Venezuela, which forms the centre, Cumana and the island of Margarita on the east, and Guayana to the south. The whole is bounded on the north by the sea, and on the west by the province, or, as it is called, the kingdom of Santa Fé: and all the arrangements for the defence and government of this great extent of country were formerly entrusted to the governor of Caracas.

Along the whole of this coast the ports are few, and generally bad. La Guayra, the port of Caracas, as has been already observed, is little better than an open road, and has evidently been chosen through necessity alone. Maracaybo has a bar,

over which vessels drawing more than ten feet water can seldom pass: and Puerto Cabello appears to be almost the only place which really deserves the name of a general harbour.

On this and other accounts I became desirous of visiting it, more especially as the road to it leads through some of the most interesting parts of the province of Venezuela. One of my countrymen bound to Curaçoa accompanied me. We carried with us a free Mulatto, who took charge of the mule; on the back of which was my companion's trunk, and our hammocks. About the fifteenth of January, 1811, we set off before day-break, but having fine moonlight, taking our course to the westward. A kind of hoar frost covered the ground, and the air was so cold that, until the sun rose, our feet and hands were benumbed, and our Mulatto trembled all over. Three or four miles from Caracas we see a small village, lying on the other side of the Guayra, pleasantly situated in a recess among the hills, and distinguishable by the white tower of its church, like

that of Macuta on the coast. This was originally an Indian village, and it still retains the name of one, although very few, if any, original families are now remaining. It stands upon a small height, at the foot of which extends a large and fertile flat, capable at all times of being irrigated, and which is generally covered with Otaheitan sugar-canes. About two leagues from Caracas we pass through a straggling village, with its church, on a small eminence, capable of being converted into a good military post for the defence of the road. The valley of Caracas now narrows rapidly, and the space between the hills seldom consists of more than the flat through which the river flows, evincing by its level surface, that after heavy rains it is frequently covered with water. After some time we leave the small heights, and descend upon the Guayra, which we cross and recross several times, until, having passed a little stream which falls into it, we approach Las Aguntas, a few houses at the foot of the mountains, which we now prepare to ascend. This post is between three and four



leagues from Caracas, and a good Pulperia affords the traveller the means of rest and refreshment. Pulperia is the name given in this country to establishments which are at the same time shops, farms, and inns, such as they may be, adapted to the state of society in the province. They are generally kept by natives of Biscay, or Catalonia, who begin their career in this country with selling victuals, liquors, cloths, and iron, or whatever they can collect, at the same time. In the towns it is easy to trace the prosperity of the owners, in the gradual change which takes place in these collections. The proportion of manufactured goods increases by degrees, until at length they form the whole, and the master becomes a respectable merchant.

As the heat of the sun had not yet become oppressive, we determined to proceed without stopping at Las Aguntas. The road soon became steep and rocky; but as we ascended we were amply repaid by the grandeur of the prospects which every step opened to our view. We continued to ascend for upwards of four miles, when we

reached the summit of the first hills, which shut in the head of the valley of Caracas, from which we soon after looked back for the last time on the town, presenting at the distance of twenty miles a singularly interesting appearance, at the foot of lofty mountains. The spot from which this farewell view, or, if we are approaching from Valencia, this first glimpse, of Caracas is obtained, is called Bona Vista, and is marked by a single miserable Venta. The road from thence leads over the high grounds, and we find ourselves in the midst of a mountainous country, the valleys of which are deep, dark, and solitary, without rivers, and the sides in general but partially covered with trees. To the south-west the ridges gradually ascend, and terminate in a lofty peak, the summit of which appeared like a black spot far above the clouds. By degrees our road led us through a wood composed of lofty trees, such as are common in the West-Indian islands, having got clear of which we at length began to descend about ten o'clock into a valley, near the bottom of which is scattered the

miserable hamlet of San Pedro, composed of fifteen or twenty houses, with an unfinished church; which, however, serves the country for many miles round. A clear stream, nearly the size of the Guayra, runs through the bottom, near which was fought the great battle with the Indian Chief, Guaycaipuro, which cleared the way for the Spaniards to the valley of Caracas. Having now completed upwards of seven leagues of our journey, we stopped to rest our horses, and repaired to a Pulperia close to the stream. Here we procured some boiled meat, cakes of maize, and eggs, and for our drink water, or guarapo, a liquor made by mixing coarse sugar with water; in twenty-four hours it begins to ferment, and soon becomes a very palatable beverage if drank when fresh. It increases in strength by keeping, but acquires a harsh taste unpleasant to a stranger, but then chiefly relished by the Indians and Mulattoes on account of its greater power of intoxication. It is generally made in great jars, like those used for oil, and buried in the ground up to the neck. Fresh materials

are added to the dregs of the old, which hasten the fermentation. This is the universal drink, as a luxury, of the great mass of the inhabitants of the country, and, is by them generally preferred even to wine.

About mid-day I followed the course of the stream, till I found a sequestered spot, shaded with trees, where I bathed. The day being cloudy, I was astonished to find the water exceedingly cold at this hour, and between the Tropics; not reflecting that San Pedro is at a still greater elevation than Caracas. Being farther refreshed by two hours' sleep upon the ground, towards three o'clock we again set off, accompanied by the owner of a coffee plantation, who joined us at the Pulperia. He had come himself to gamble, and brought his wife and sister to attend mass; which they had done regularly every day for a month; and having thus said the proper number of Ave Marias, and laid in a sufficient stock of devotion, they were preparing to return with it to their solitary habitation, where they might probably remain another year without seeing a church. After ascending from

San Pedro, which we begin to do immediately from the banks of the river, and riding about two leagues, we begin to have a view of the country on the other side of the chain of the hills we are passing, and soon afterwards the descent commences. We first, however, turned off from our road into a deep valley, where lay the coffee estate of our companion, and which we found to be but newly commenced; and surrounded on every side by woods. The young coffee plants were all shaded by low frames, covered with a species of fern, which effectually excluded the heat of the sun, and is always necessary, we were told, for the first year. The house commanded a view over all the valley, where there was not another human habitation to be seen; the land, with little cultivation, yielded every vegetable necessary for subsistence; and the neighbouring woods abounded with deer, which occasionally, as we rode along, burst through the thicket. Here, it might be thought, an independent man, married to a young and beautiful woman, the peaceful monarch of all around him, might pass

a life worthy of envy. But the human mind, it would appear, requires or relishes more powerful stimulants than the calm beauties of nature. Our companion was already dissatisfied with his lot, which afforded such few varieties, and had frequent recourse to gambling, with the nearest planters, in order to agitate his soul with the strong alternations of hope and fear.

Besides deer, I was credibly informed that a species of unicorn is found among the woods on the mountains of San Pedro. Several colonists mentioned having heard of such an animal; but in Caracas a native of Old Spain, a young man of respectability, assured me positively that once, when shooting with a party on these mountains, one of his companions killed an animal, which he narrowly inspected, more resembling a very large goat than a deer, and having only a single horn exactly in the middle of the head. I could not refuse yielding belief to this account, which was repeated to me at various times, without the smallest appearance of exaggeration, or the idea of there being any thing extraordinary

in the circumstance. It is probable that a very few years will either bring forward undeniable proofs of the existence of this animal, or afford just grounds to suspect the truth of all the narrations concerning it.

Having at length reached the summits of this great chain of hills, and preparing to descend on the opposite side, we enjoy most beautiful views of the green cultivated valleys at a great distance beneath us. The long and rapid descent is reckoned to be nearly four leagues from the summit of the hills to the Coucuissas, a name said by some to be derived from the tribe of Indians which formerly was established there; and, by others, from the aloes with which it once abounded. Night, however, surprised us, before we were half down the mountain, and we stopped at a small house, where we thought ourselves happy in procuring green maize for our horses and mules. The whole plant is cut down and given to them, nor is there any green food which appears to yield them so much sustenance. For ourselves, two fowls were speedily killed and cooked, and cakes

of maize made warm ; but the whole house afforded only one small table, and neither chair, nor stool, of any kind. We therefore followed the fashion of the country ; and when supper was brought in, hung our hammocks sufficiently low to serve for seats, and placed the table between us. When we reclined, we might have passed for two Romans on *Triclinia*, had they not been continually swinging to and fro with the slightest motion. Our seats were likewise our beds. These kind of houses here are almost wholly devoid of furniture. The lower classes sleep on mats, spread on the earth floor, and the better sort have hammocks. Every traveller is supposed to carry his hammock with him ; and for his accommodation, nails or hooks are fastened into the walls, sometimes so insecurely that he runs considerable risk of coming to the ground in his sleep, head or feet foremost, as it may happen.

On the spot where this hut now stands, there is a tradition of a Spanish prisoner having been killed, and eaten, by the native Indians, during their wars with the first



adventurers. His fate was unknown to his companions, until one of his fingers, which was distinguished by a scar, was found among the ashes. This was all that remained of the unfortunate Marques; but the hut still retains his name, and marks the spot where he suffered.

After hearing this tale, which was here related as if it had been an important event in history, I went out to breathe the cool air, before betaking myself to my hammock. The night was calm; but on the summit of many a dark mountain round, distant fires were blazing, which had been lighted to clear away the ground, and which cast a pale and trembling light upwards to the clouds. It appeared as if ancient times were suddenly recalled, and that armies of Indians were advancing in all directions again, to make a sacrifice to their gods of us unfortunate Europeans.

About three o'clock in the morning, we again set out, and continued our descent, guided by the light of the stars. This part of the road we found in some places more steep and rugged than any in our whole

journey, being indeed more difficult to pass than the worst between La Guayra and Caracas. Here a catastrophe befel my unfortunate companion, somewhat similar to that of Timothy Crabshawe, in one of his midnight wanderings with Sir Lancelot Greaves. I was suddenly surprized by the sight of his horse, which appeared at my side full of glee but without his rider. Alarmed at this phenomenon, I halted, and heard the sound of "stop my horse" re-echoing through the woods, and soon found that my friend, passing too closely under one of the trees, had encountered a bough, where his horse proceeding from under him had left him swinging in the wind. At day dawn, we reached Las Coucuissas, consisting of a few scattered houses, at the bottom of the hill. Of these, the principal was a Pulperia, before the door of which a number of Indians and other travellers, proceeding to Caracas, were collected, waiting till it should be opened to prepare themselves for climbing the mountains, from which we had just descended. Among the Indians, were many young

women of pleasing features, who were going together in parties, to seek for work in the coffee plantations, where they are employed in picking the berries. They told me that in the low countries, their usual wages were about two reals, or one quarter of a dollar per day, besides a small quantity of provisions; but that in the high lands of Caracas, they would not work during the coffee season, under three reals, on account of its being there so extremely cold. The men who accompanied them were in general strong and stout, but though large, yet not so well limbed as the Indians of North America. Their colour was of a yellowish cast, inclining to copper; their hair long, coarse, and black, growing low down upon a narrow forehead: the nose at the point suddenly becoming sharp, like that of a person worn out by long illness; the eyes black, melancholy, and inexpressive; the lips thick, and the mouth somewhat ~~large~~. The general air of these Indians was heavy, sad, and sullen. Some of them, while they rested their burthens, amused themselves by blowing into a spe-

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ies of flute, if it can be so called, without doubt one of the rudest ever sounded by the human breath. They consisted of single joints of cane with one longitudinal opening in the side, too long to be covered with the whole palm of the hand, when applied to it. They blew into the upper part of this aperture, and according as they covered more or less of the lower part with their hands, was the tone somewhat varied. The sound was like that of the wind sighing in the forests, or among rocks: sometimes rising almost to a scream, and then dying away into a whisper. This alternate rise and fall constituted the whole of the music; which, excepting the drum of the negroes, consisting of a solid piece of wood, beat by two sticks, was the rudest I had ever heard. It seemed, however, to afford infinite satisfaction to those for whose ears it was designed; they listened in silence, and when the performers reached the height of screaming, all eyes were turned towards us, to see if we were not yet touched by such master-pieces of melody. At length the doors of the Pulperia opened, and the music ceased.

Each of these Indians carried a burthen of a great weight. They in general consisted of a kind of tall round basket, or cage, formed of cane and rushes, upwards of six feet in height, with a conical top, and divided into five or six stages full of fowls. I tried to lift some of them, and could not estimate their weight at less than two hundred English pounds. It is in these cages that the Indians bring every kind of fowl to market, as well as monkeys and parrots, carrying them on their backs, supported by a broad strap which goes over the forehead. In this manner they travel over mountains and valleys, more than a hundred miles to Caracas, with poultry. The boys begin with small cages, gradually increasing the size and weight, until they are able to carry the largest, on which point there is great emulation amongst them.

Close behind the Coucuissas runs the river Tuy, in a narrow valley, through which is the road to Victoria. This stream, here rather more considerable than the Guayra of Caracas, flows first to the westward, but afterwards winds round the hills,

and falls into the Guayra, which it greatly augments, and renders navigable for canoes. At the Coucuissas we pass this river, or rather go splashing along its bed for about fifty yards, when, after a short ride on its bank, we pass it again. In this manner we cross or wade along the bed of the river, more than twenty-five times in the space of two leagues, with the water generally up to the girth of the saddle; such is the narrowness of the valley, and the steepness of its sides. At some places only fertile spots have been banked in and cultivated; but no attempt has yet been made to form a road along the side of the hills, although all the objects of commerce between Caracas and the valleys of Aragoa and Valencia pass this way. In other points of view, although not highly picturesque, the natural beauties of this valley are yet sufficient to compensate the traveller for its inconveniences. Sometimes the river, divided into several channels, runs through among the trees, which border the sides of the valley; then, suddenly uniting into one, it pours along a

clear and rapid stream over a bed of smooth rounded stones. Here and there are scattered huge trunks of trees, which have been brought down by the torrents, and now form bridges over some divisions of the stream. The steep sides of the valley are generally green, or covered with weeds, amongst which we can notice trees, on which are large bosses of plastered earth; the nests of a species of ant, furnished with long winding passages of the same material, by which to reach the ground. At length the valley widens; we leave the river, and proceeding along the side of the hills on our right, enjoy for some time a view of it as it flows amid various flourishing plantations. In other parts it is concealed from us by tall reeds or canes, which grow along the banks to the height of twenty-five or thirty feet, and are swayed to and fro by one impulse of the slightest breeze. Not far from this, we arrive at El Consejo, sometimes called Mamou, consisting of about two hundred poor houses; but which indicate, by the new appearance of many of them,

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that the place is rapidly increasing. We may now consider ourselves as in one of the vales of Aragoa, so much extolled for beauty and fertility. The valley here opens rapidly, and after riding about two leagues farther we arrive at La Victoria.



## CHAP. V.

*La Victoria to Valencia and Puerto Cabello.*

**L**A Victoria is a scattered town, situated mostly in a plain, and interspersed with gardens and trees; so that it is not easy to form an accurate estimate of its extent, until after traversing it in every direction, and viewing it from the surrounding heights. Some of the principal streets contain houses equal to those of Caracas, and the general appearance, although irregular, is pleasing, conveying the idea of something between a town and a very large village. The principal officers of the militia of the neighbouring valleys of Aragoa reside here, thus making it as it were a seat of Government, and contributing materially to form the manners of the inhabitants, such as they are. A large Plaza, or public square, is marked out, but the houses are not yet completed. On one side stands the principal church; which, although not finished, is, in its inte-

rior, beyond comparison the most beautiful and best proportioned public edifice that I saw in the whole country. Its form is oblong ; and, besides being large and lofty, a simplicity reigns throughout the whole, which contrasts most favourably with all the other churches of the province. This beauty will, perhaps, however vanish in a great degree, with the growing prosperity of the town. Its walls and pillars will become covered with pictures, gilded statues of saints, and altars of a great variety of forms adorned with lamps and candlesticks. Yet even then, in my opinion, the interior of the church of La Victoria will remain an honourable monument to the memory of the architect by whom it was planned,

A river as large as the Tuy runs near the town, and supplies abundance of water for the purposes of irrigation. The plantations round are in general well cultivated; and I here, for the first time, saw the spectacle, so novel and so interesting to an European, of wheat and the sugar cane growing close together. The wheat, which was still green, appeared as fine as any I had ever

seen in England, and was not separated, even by the slightest trench, from extensive fields of Otaheitan sugar canes, by which it was inclosed.

La Victoria was originally a village peopled with Indians, whom the missionaries had collected together ; but the goodness of the soil, and the advantages of situation, rapidly collected settlers from every part, until very few descendants of the first Indian families now remain. The population is about eight thousand souls, among which are many Creole families of distinction. The love of gaming, so general in all the colonies, is here carried to great excess. At the Posada where I stopped, parties assembled for that purpose, from morning to night; and I daily witnessed all the agitation which this miserable passion excites. The most violent quarrels and even bloodshed were sometimes the result, but in general the anger of the parties was satisfied with horrid imprecations and the most desperate threats.

Although generally very healthy, La Victoria suffered about six years ago from a

destructive epidemic disorder, which raged throughout the vallies of Aragoa and the plains of Valencia. Those who were taken ill seldom escaped, and their fate was soon determined. It frequently commenced its attacks by the head, the patient dropped down without the least previous complaint, and sometimes expired in less than an hour. So numerous were these instances, that persons were employed to go about the streets to collect the bodies of those who died thus suddenly, and carry them away for interment. I was shown a servant of the Posada who, being subject to epileptic fits, had dropped down in the street, and been carried away with the dead. The bodies were arranged in the church previous to interment, while the priest repeated the usual prayers; in the middle of which the epileptic man recovered from his trance, and got up as suddenly as he had fallen down. The priest was disconcerted and dropped his book; while the congregation, no less alarmed, hurried out of the church, or fervently crossed themselves as being unable to move.

Having stopped a few days at La Victoria, we prepared to continue our journey, and set off before dawn for San Mateo, distant about two leagues. Between the two, the road crosses a small ridge, from which we obtain the first view of the lake of Valencia, and of the grand plain in which it lies. This view may be classed among some of the most magnificent in nature. We beheld at break of day, a rich plain extending before us to the westward more than fifty miles, a long regular line at a great distance which marked the lake, and the horizon bordered with high mountains. After descending from this little height we saw no more of the lake until after passing the straggling villages of San Mateo and Tulmero, and approaching Maracai, when it appeared again not far from us. The plantations in the neighbourhood of San Mateo are mostly of sugar canes, and those around Tulmero, of tobacco.

After halting at Tulmero, which is two leagues and a half from San Mateo, we arrived at Maracai in the heat of the day, a farther distance of three leagues and a

half over an open country, or covered only with bushes, which afford shelter to a vast number of small deer. We were struck with the appearance of Maracai, which, as we had been informed, was, forty years ago, no more than a hamlet. It is now a town, containing nearly ten thousand inhabitants; the principal street through which the road passes is more than half a mile in length, and many of the houses are built of stone. It stands near the eastern end of the lake, but not immediately upon it. Charming plantations extend from it in all directions, and there is a general air of prosperity, and still more of activity, which I was puzzled to account for, until I learned that work was here chiefly performed by free labourers, and the use of slaves for the great purposes of society, comparatively speaking, but little known.

We were conducted to a decent Posada, and our Mulatto, without asking any questions, having slung our hammocks as a matter of course, we followed the general example of thus resting for two hours during the heat of the day. In the after-

noon we pursued our journey. Soon after leaving Maracai we began to have occasional views of the lake through the trees and bushes which border the road; and having proceeded about three leagues, and passing a few houses called Tapatapa, we arrived at La Cabrera, or the Goatfold; where stood a Pulperia, and a few houses at the foot of a small calcareous hill. As the sun was just about to set, we ascended this eminence by a winding path formed by the numerous goats which browse upon it, and enjoyed from the top a view the most beautiful that can be imagined. The hills at La Cabrera advance into the lake, and thus enable us to see nearly the whole of its extent. This beautiful sheet of water, which is upwards of thirteen hundred feet above the level of the sea, and was called by the Indians the Lake of Tacarigua, extends about thirty miles in a direction from E. N. E. to W. S. W. and appears to be about twelve in its greatest breadth. It resembles Loch Lomond in the number of small islands scattered over its bosom, amounting to twenty-seven; but the moun-

tains which surround it, although desert, have not the wild and rugged character of those which border the Scottish Lake. The southern side, even viewed at this distance, is highly picturesque, the water approaching close to the foot of the hills; which, being covered with forests of mimosas and broad-leaved bananas, have a softness and luxuriance which cannot be surpassed. At both ends of the lake, the country is level, soon terminating to the eastward in the hills which shut in the valley of La Victoria, but extending to the south-west beyond Valencia farther than the eye can reach. The whole of this grand scene was now enriched with all the soft tints which the sun, just sunk below the horizon, could impart in this delightful climate. The tops of the highest mountains still glowed with fire, but a purple light reigned in the valleys, and a soberer tint was spread over the surface of the lake. Upon it, appeared at a distance a small solitary sail, being the first that in the knowledge of man was here ever spread. From a knowledge of this circumstance we viewed it with some inte-



rest, as the germ of future improvement and utility.

At length the prospect became indistinct, and we descended to the house. The small canoes of the fishermen were drawn up on the beach ; but we observed black moving spots upon the lake, which, we were afterwards informed, were the heads of *bavas*, a species of crocodile, three or four feet in length, which are here very numerous, but harmless. In the interior of the country, they are found in very small lakes and ponds, where they are frequently seen sleeping with their heads above the surface. Having reached the house, we found our supper prepared, of fish fresh from the lake, and were afterwards presented with cocoa made very sweet, and with draughts of guarapo. A shed, supported by posts, and open on three sides, was allotted to us for the night. Our hammocks were fastened from side to side, and we enjoyed, as we lay, the brilliancy of the stars, until gradually lulled to sleep by the monotonous sound of the small waves which fell upon the shore.

Nothing can shew more strongly the great room for improvement in this country, than the simple fact to which I have alluded, of boats, with sails, having never yet been used by the inhabitants of the borders of the lake of Valencia. Although separated from the sea by only a single range of hills, and using small boats on the lake for the purpose of fishing, it is somewhat singular, that in the course of more than two centuries, none of them should have thought of using a sail. A native of Biscay, settled in Valencia, had now first tried the experiment, and it formed no small part of the conversation of those who were assembled at the Pulperia of La Cabrera.

We set off, as usual, before break of day. From the eminence of La Cabrera, the preceding evening, we had flattered ourselves with a charming ride along the borders of the lake, to Valencia; but in this we found ourselves disappointed. Except some partial glimpses through the trees, in descending from the small heights of La Cabrera, we were soon confined to a

road, bordered with trees and bushes, which seldom afforded openings towards the lake. When they did, it was tantalizing to see ourselves so close to this beautiful sheet of water, but prevented from enjoying the view of it, by tangled bushes and reeds. At the end of five leagues, after passing the small hamlets of Mariara, Agua Blanca, Cura, and San Joaquin, the former of which has a neat little white church, we arrive at Guacara, a straggling village, containing, as I should suppose, about four thousand inhabitants. The houses are almost universally low and mean, but bear the appearance of increasing in number. Here we rested, the heat becoming oppressive. We procured in the village bananas, eggs, and cakes of maize; on which we breakfasted, and then rested in our hammocks till the afternoon. From Guacara to Valencia, is a distance of four leagues, through a country mostly open, and constantly level. The whole of the immense plain of Valencia presents indeed every appearance of having been formerly

covered with water. It is in general level; up to the very bases of the surrounding hills, and the soil has every appearance of being formed by sediment. As we approach Valencia, the road winds near the foot of some high and steep rocks, forming here a kind of pass: directly after which we have a view of the town, situated upon small slopes, and open on every side. Before entering it, we cross a small stream, which runs at the foot of the first of these slopes, and are immediately in the town; the appearance of which has nothing striking. Some of the streets, it is true, are tolerably well built; but the houses are in general low and irregular. On the eastern side of the great square, stands the principal church, by no means equal to that of La Victoria, either in its size or proportions. Into this square, General Miranda, and the troops of Caracas, penetrated in an attack made some months subsequent to the time of my being there, but were repulsed with great loss, by the fire from the windows and the tops of the

houses, and obliged to retreat to Guacara. As yet no blood had been spilt; but all was silence, mistrust, suspicion, and alarm.

The Posada, where we stopped, was kept by a Biscayan, and a considerable number of his countrymen assembled in the evening, to drink and gamble. When no native of America was present, they complained bitterly of the hardships of their situation. Suspected without a cause, closely watched, and continually liable to insults, they were ill-treated, merely for being natives of Old Spain, and supposed to be therefore inimical to the cause of independence. They had almost all been many years in the country; were married, and had establishments, either commercial or agricultural, where they had introduced many improvements, and one of them was the proprietor of the boat on the lake, which had excited so much attention; they had declared their resolution to take no hostile measures, and to be bound by every legal restriction; but the patriotic party was not satisfied. Many of their friends had been already obliged

to quit the province; of those who remained, others were preparing to follow, and not one could consider himself as secure in his property, or even in his life. As they constituted the most active class of citizens in Valencia, their forced seclusion from business sufficiently accounted for the dullness which reigned throughout the place. Instead of the bustle, which usually prevails in all towns and villages, in hot countries, after the sun is gone down, we had passed as through a town half deserted, where the people met together in groupes, at the corners of a few streets, to whisper and surmise fearful changes.

Valencia stands about three miles to the westward of the lake to which it gives name, but which is still sometimes known by its ancient Indian appellation of Tacarigua. It was founded about the year 1556 by Alonzo Dias Morena, principally with the view of forming a station, from which to advance against the valley of Caracas. Its advantageous situation, however, as a point of communication be-

tween Puerto Cabello and the inland towns, has given it a rapid progress in improvement. The present population amounts to about ten thousand souls, among which many are of the immediate descendants of Biscayans and Catalonians.

Hitherto, our journey from Caracas has been along the southern side of the chain of mountains which stretches from the Gulph of Paria to the westward of Carthagena, and forms a lofty barrier between the interior of the continent and the sea. To reach Puerto Cabello, we must cross this chain, at the base of which, on opposite sides, lie Valencia and its port, with different elevations, but in the same relative positions as Caracas and La Guayra. From Valencia, over the plain, to the foot of the Sierra, is about four leagues, when we find two or three houses, and a small guard. Immediately afterwards, we begin to climb a steep ascent of two leagues, until near the summit, we reach a small Venta, kept by a Biscayan, where travellers usually halt. There is a delightful view from this Venta, and from a neigh-

bouring height, on which a brass cannon, miserably mounted, is planted, rather, it would seem, to communicate signals, than for the purpose of defence. From this height, we cast our eyes over great part of the plain of Valencia, and of the lake, which we see between the rugged summits of intervening hills; while, to the westward, we behold plains, bordered by mountains, stretching out farther than the eye can reach. Soon after quitting this Venta, we reach the summit of the ridge, and enjoy a last view of Valencia. During the whole ascent, few or only stunted trees are to be seen; but immediately that we reach the top, we find ourselves in a forest. Our guide told us, I know not with what truth, that tigers were sometimes seen in this part of the road. At this intelligence, we drew out our pistols, the only defence we had, and proceeded with them in our hands. The possibility of an attack from so formidable an enemy, seemed to increase the deep shades of the surrounding woods. I had never before passed over a road, which, without affording very extensive



prospects, was yet so calculated to inspire grand and gloomy ideas. The view was bounded by high mountains, except towards the north, which afforded at intervals a partial glimpse of the sea. All around were peaked hills and deep vallies, clothed with trees. At every step we seemed to be descending, still more and more, into an immense amphitheatre, on the summit of which the clouds rested. The silence of the forest was broken at intervals, by the cries of unknown birds, and, as we descended still more and more, by the fall and the rushing of water on our left. We looked down, and beheld an immense chasm, at the bottom of which, the tallest trees appeared small, and where a considerable stream, by its windings and changes of form, gave unceasing variety to the views. Sometimes it appeared below us, like a long narrow lake of great depth, terminating at one end in a noisy cascade. Sometimes it rushed along through a deep channel of solid rocks, which it had evidently worn for itself, in the course of ages, or strayed amongst huge blocks of

granite, which interrupted its course. The first objects which we saw to break the wildness of the scene, were solitary huts, formed of branches of trees, plastered with clay, surrounded by a little spot of cleared ground. These huts gradually increased in number, and improved in appearance as we descended, until they terminated at length in handsome houses and plantations. We passed the torrent by a bridge, still in an unfinished state, and found that the scenery had here lost none of its interest. I have seen many glens, but none to equal this, which winds from the summit of the lofty mountains almost to the sea shore. At length we left the woods, and after a continued descent of five leagues, came in sight of Puerto Cabello, situated in a flat close to the sea, amidst marshes, full of mangrove trees, and overflowed with the tide. We were struck with the mean appearance of the houses, which were all low, and in many instances, seemed little superior to the huts we had passed in the woods. In the whole place we could not find a Posada, and were fortunate in



having letters, which procured us an asylum in a private family. Here we soon forgot the fatigue of our journey, and were enabled, during a week's residence, to make our observations on the port and the neighbouring country.

Puerto Cabello stands upon a small neck of land, which has been cut through, and thus formed into an artificial island. A bridge crosses this cut, and affords entrance to the original city, which is small but tolerably well built and fortified. The harbour is formed by a low island to the north-west and banks covered with mangrove trees, which shelter it on every side. It is deep and capacious. An excellent wharf, faced with stone, allows of vessels of a large burthen being layed close alongside of it; and as they can be easily and securely fastened to the shore, anchors are here seldom necessary. To this circumstance, in which it resembles the harbour of Curaçoa, Puerto Cabello is said to owe its name, as implying that vessels may there be secured by a single hain. The island is strongly fortified; and the batteries, being

low and mounted with heavy cannon, are capable of making a good defence. Towards the land the works are not so strong, and the whole is within reach of bomb-shot from the first heights to the southward of the town, some of which are fortified.

This harbour and La Guayra form a striking contrast. Here vessels lie, as in a small smooth lake, while the waves break high upon the outside of the island and along the shore. In return for this, the worm makes great ravages in the bottom of such ships as are not coppered. In no part of the world is it more destructive; and a small vessel left unattended, in a very few months would founder at her moorings from this cause alone.

The plain in which Puerto Cabello stands is bounded on the south by mountains, and on the north by the sea, and is no where more than two miles in breadth. To the west a small river descends from the mountains, and empties itself into the sea. To the south-east of the town the flats are annually flooded by the rains; and the exha-

lations from them are very probably the cause of the destructive fevers which so frequently rage here in the summer and autumn months. Few strangers can then visit this port with impunity, or at least without great danger; and there have been instances of vessels losing the greater part of their crews in a very short time. This, however, has not prevented the rapid increase of the place, which was originally confined within the works upon the small peninsula, out of which no houses were for some time allowed to be built. At first low huts were erected, under the express condition of being demolished in case of an enemy's approach; and in a long interval of years, during which no hostile force appeared, these huts were gradually enlarged and increased. The suburbs now exceed the town in population and extent, but still retain their low and mean appearance, and are subject to the original stipulations in case of danger. A great proportion of the houses have no upper story; and the population being almost entirely coloured, a

stranger is more apt to consider the whole as a large Indian village than as part of an European settlement.

About a league to the westward of Puerto Cabello is the small bay of Borburata, used as a port previous to the establishment of the former. The road to it leads across the marshy plain of Puerto Cabello to the side of the hills, along which it winds for some time, until it again crosses a sandy flat, and brings us to the opening of the valley of Borburata. The bottom of this valley is level, or very gently sloped, towards the sea, and consists of a deep rich mould, every where covered with banana trees, mimosas, triplaris, and plantations of sugar, coffee, and cacao. The latter are easily distinguished by the tall erytrines which shade the cacao theobroma, and are covered with clusters of red flowers. As they rise with a straight stem, they permit a free circulation of air beneath, while their tufted tops effectually exclude the scorching rays of the sun. Houses and clusters of huts are scattered about among the trees,

and a kind of church marks what may be considered as the centre of the village of Borburata. A small stream serves to irrigate the numerous plantations. The population is entirely a coloured race, in which is a great proportion of Indian blood. The air of the valley is moist and hot; and snakes abound in the luxuriant herbage which every where covers the soil. One of these crossed my path, and another, large and yellow with dark spots, lay basking beneath a bush, into which he glided on my approach. Mountains, covered with wood, inclose this fertile flat on every side, except a small opening towards the sea. Here, lower down was formerly the principal port on the coast. Vessels drawing ten or twelve feet water can anchor in a bite near the shore; the bottom is a fine white sand; and Borburata is still the chief port from which the mules, horses, and cattle, of Venezuela, are exported to Jamaica, and other islands of the West-Indies.

The population of Borburata, as might naturally be expected from its formation,

is decidedly in favour of the new system of government. That of Puerto Cabello was long of a more doubtful cast, until the expulsion of almost the whole of the native Spaniards, who were there established either in publick or private situations. Even yet they were supposed to have left behind them many adherents, attached by long habits of intercourse, or by near family ties. A strong but secret party existed, more formidable from its comparative knowledge, and extensive connections, than from numbers or power, from which last indeed it was almost entirely excluded. The neighbourhood, and the frequent intercourse with Curaçoa, afforded regular information as to the real state of affairs in the European peninsula, and thus enabled them to detect, and secretly to expose, the fallacious accounts so frequently current of the retreat and embarkation of the English, and the final and compleat extinction of the Spanish cause. Their enemies, on the other hand, supplied by numbers and vehemence what was deficient in correct infor-



mation ; and as they continued daily to acciise and send away the most eminent of their opponents, one party increased in strength in proportion as the other was gradually losing all traces of its former ascendancy.

## CHAP. VI.

*Return to Caracas.—General View.*

**A**FTER ten days' residence at Puerto Cabello, I prepared to return to Caracas, leaving my companion, who waited for a vessel bound to Curaçoa. On the 6th February, 1811, I set off, attended by my trusty Mulatto, and soon lost sight of the unhealthy flat of Puerto Cabello. In two hours I was amongst woods, and water-falls, and mountains, and clouds; and looked down with undiminished pleasure on the dark romantic glen which had so much delighted me in my descent. From the summit of the mountains I once more enjoyed a view of the extensive plain of Valencia, and descended to that ill-fated town. I saw again the pass of El Morro and the village of Mariara, where civil bloodshed was first to take place. Once more, I traversed the banks of the lake, and enjoyed from the top

of La Cabrera a view which, as the sun disappeared, acquired new charms beneath the mild light of the moon. I again admired the thriving appearance of Maracai, and on the eminence which divides La Victoria from the plains of Valencia took a distant and farewell view of the lake.

From La Victoria, through El Consejo, I descended into the valley and bed of the Tuy, which I again traversed upwards of five and twenty times before reaching Las Coucuissas, at the foot of the mountains which separate the vallies of Aragoa from that of Caracas. On the summits of these mountains I once more felt the grateful influence of cold, once more saw vallies dark and deep without rivers or lakes, and viewed Caracas at the distance of twenty miles, presenting an appearance the most beautiful and interesting. I descended towards this charming valley with a mind full of all the wonders I had seen; and, finally, having left a brother in Caracas, I entered my residence there with feelings somewhat similar to those which a traveller expe-

riences when after a long absence he visits his native home.

Thus have we traversed a small but interesting portion of the Continent of America. Every where we have found a fertile soil, and, except in particular spots upon the coast, a pure and healthy air. Even the unwholesomeness of these situations is compensated by their exuberant fertility, and by the gradual adaptation of the inhabitants to the atmosphere in which they live. With little labour man here earns an easy subsistence, and the industrious European has never failed to acquire in time a certain portion of opulence and ease. Let us recapitulate some of the more obvious particulars, and add others as they may occur to our remembrance. We will then examine what has retarded, and long will retard, the progress of this country towards that perfection which some of its admirers so ardently contemplate.

We land at La Guayra. A heavy surf breaks along the shore, and we are obliged to watch the swelling of the waves to leap

upon the wharf. Flocks of grey pelicans float upon the waves, from which they rise at intervals, and then plunge down upon their prey. We notice the fins of sharks above the water, whilst people are carelessly swimming near the wharf, and are told, that, by a sacred charm, these voracious fish have no power to do hurt between the two small capes that shelter the road of La Guayra. When we are farther credibly informed, that accidents never do occur; being hereticks, we attribute it to the constant noise of the breakers, and agitation of the water. From La Guayra to Puerto Cabello, high mountains border all the coast: rising, generally, immediately from the sea. At intervals, rich valleys open, and the sides of the mountains are covered with the finest trees, whilst their opposite slopes towards the interior are bare, or covered only with inferior timber. The average height of this chain of mountains is about four thousand five hundred feet above the level of the sea, although the peak, which rises to the eastward, and behind La Guayra, is upwards of eight thou-

sand feet high. In this town, closely confined by steep hills, we do not stop longer than is necessary to taste the tropical fruits; or perhaps to visit a wild glen which bounds it to the eastward, and to bathe in the cool stream, which there pours down from the hills. We pass the pleasant village of Macuta, a mile from La Guayra, and soon look down upon it, from the height of a thousand feet. We ascend, and, on the mountain tops, the European breathes with delight, the cool air of his native country between the tropics. We go on foot, and smile at the idea of a bad road forming a defence to a great country. How charming is the view of the valley of Caracas at the dawn of day, when the mists slowly rising unveil the prospect, and linger in the form of white clouds on the tops of the surrounding hills! We descend to the town, and pause anew to make our observations.

Four leagues to the eastward of Caracas, on a gentle eminence, from which springs gush forth, stands a pleasant village, originally inhabited entirely by Indians. To

the westward, on the other hand, on the opposite side of the Guayra, in a small recess of the mountains, a white church tower, surrounded by huts, points out an establishment, formed by the Missionaries. All throughout the valley are plantations of sugar, coffee, and maize. Irrigation is well understood, and its general use is favoured by the nature of the ground, which constantly slopes towards the east. The water is led in channels, from the upper parts of the stream, along the sides of the hills, and afterwards distributed throughout the fields. The same system is practised at the plantations on the Tuy, near Las Coucuisas; at La Victoria, and in the vallies of Aragoa. The use of the plough is unknown. All work is done with the spade and the hoe, and chiefly by slaves. The lighter work is performed by Indians, and free labourers, which last class is increasing rapidly. Maize and plantains form the basis of their food, to which are added, beef and garlic. The maize is generally eaten in the form of cakes, being first soaked, deprived of the husk, and then

ground, or rather rubbed into a moist paste, by means of a roller, and a smooth curved slab of stone. This operation falls to the lot of the women. Beef seldom exceeds two pence sterling per pound, although sometimes, for several days together, there is none to be procured, owing to the want of regularity in the supplies from the interior, or the droughts in summer, when herbage cannot be procured along the road. The meat, when meant to be kept, is, in a manner, torn in long slips from the bone, soaked in strong brine, and then hung over poles in the open air, to dry. At every butchery, flocks of carrion-vultures, of a disgusting appearance, regularly attend, and being seldom molested, become nearly tame. To them is committed the task of picking the bones, and removing all the offals, which otherwise, with the indolence of the inhabitants, would, in this climate, soon become intolerable. Poultry is scarce and dear; a Spanish dollar being frequently the price of a common fowl. Mutton is unknown. Although this country has been colonized



for nearly three centuries, the sheep has not yet been introduced upon these mountains, where it could not fail to multiply rapidly. The flesh of goats is used instead; which, although sufficiently palatable when young, can never be compared for flavour, delicacy, and nutriment, with that of the sheep. Fish are seldom procured good at Caracas. It is a journey of six or eight hours for a slave from the coast; which, in this climate, when added to other necessary delays, seldom fails to deprive them of their flavour. The mode of cooking is entirely Spanish, oil and garlick being necessary ingredients in most dishes, and both being imported, in large quantities, for that purpose. There is a dispensation from the Pope, for eating meat in Lent, and on fast days, on account of the difficulty of procuring fish, in many parts of the interior. At the close of all entertainments, great quantities of sweetmeats are used, of which the Creoles are exceedingly fond. In lieu of sweatmeats, the common people use coarse sugar, in the form of loaves, called papelon. It is also customary

at feasts, even at the best tables, for the guests to pocket fruits and other articles, as I have witnessed to my great surprise. Although, generally, a sober race, on these occasions they drink liberally of strong liqueurs, in bumpers, to each other, or to favourite political toasts; a custom which they appear to have borrowed from the English. This they do standing up, or walking about, recurring to the table, at intervals. Meantime the ladies sit mingled with them, or in a contiguous apartment, the doors of which are open. The conversation is free; for an Englishman, frequently too much so. Every thing may be said, provided it be but slightly covered. A very little ingenuity is accepted as an apology for the grossest allusions.

In a word, the general manners and customs of the province are those of Spain, by no means improved by crossing the Atlantic, or by the mixture of Indian and Negro blood with that of the first conquerors. It may be laid down, as an axiom, that wherever there is slavery, there is corruption of manners. There is a re-

action of evil from the oppressed to the oppressor, from the slave to his master. Here it has been weakened, by the general mildness observed towards domestic slaves; but it has not been destroyed, and, even should slavery be finally abolished, its influence over private life will long be felt.

After great debates, the importation of slaves has been forbidden by the new legislature; although many still remain of opinion, that they are necessary to the prosperity of the country. During my stay at La Guayra, a vessel arrived from the coast of Africa, with negroes: but as she had sailed previously to the passing of the prohibitory law, they were allowed to be landed, and were sold immediately, at more than three hundred dollars each, upon an average.

In general, the owners of slaves are little anxious how they are supported, provided they perform the usual offices, and make their appearance on certain occasions of ceremony. This is a great source of dishonesty. Whenever a slave can by any means make up the sum of three hundred

dollars to his owner, he is free. He is not even obliged to give this sum at once, but may pay it in single dollars, or half dollars, until the amount be complete. A slave has also the liberty of seeking a new master, and may go about to sell himself. These, and other regulations, tend, in some measure, to alleviate the evils of slavery, and still more to evince, by their beneficial effects, how much preferable would be its complete abolition.

Almost the whole commerce of the country is carried on by European Spaniards, and by Islenos, or Islanders, from the Canaries. They buy and sell, are the merchants and the shopkeepers, in all the towns. A spirit of union, and frequently, an impenetrable provincial dialect, binds them together, and gives them great advantages in all their transactions. The European, who expects to see a number of purchasers in competition, is frequently surprised to find only one or two, until the bargain being completed, the whole who were interested in it, appear. The natives of the country, so far from consi-

dering this transaction of their affairs by strangers as a reproach to their indolence, turn it into a source of national pride. "The Americans," say they, "have no need to go to Europe; but it plainly appears, that Europeans have need of us. We are not, like them, obliged to hawk our commodities over half the globe. Our rich and abundant products draw them hither, and convert them into our servants," In this manner reason the Chinese, vain of their supposed superiority over all mankind. And in this manner might argue the savages of the South Seas, who behold Europeans visiting them, but who never visit Europe.

The manners of the towns, and in the interior, differ greatly, or rather they belong to different periods in the progress of society. After passing the great chain of mountains which borders all this coast, from the gulph of Venezuela to that of Paria, we come to immense plains, devoid of trees, known by the general name of Las Llanos, or the Plains. Beyond them are other ridges of high mountains, which

the traveller beholds rising gradually above the horizon, like land when first discovered at sea. These plains afford pasturage to innumerable cattle, the proprietors of which reside in the great towns, leaving them to the care of slaves, or people of colour. Hence a population is rapidly forming of a character wholly different from that of the immediate descendants of Europeans, or the natives of the coast. A bold and lawless race, accustomed to be always on horseback and living nearly in a state of nature, wanders over these plains. Among them are many professed robbers, who render travelling dangerous, and are already beginning to form into small bands. They live almost entirely on the flesh of cattle, without regarding to whom they belong; killing an animal at every meal, and after satisfying their hunger, leaving the remainder of the carcase to the birds of prey and the wild animals of the desert. These men are well known, and frequently pointed out in the villages, but the inefficacy of the laws leaves them at liberty, until some act of uncommon atrocity excites the attention of the magis-

trates. Even after being seized, they frequently make their escape, either through the carelessness of their keepers, or the delays of justice; and return with increased avidity to their former mode of life. In the villages and small towns thinly scattered over these plains, great dissoluteness of morals prevails. The mixture of races is a source of endless corruption, to which are joined a climate inducing indolence and voluptuousness, and the total absence of all refined methods of passing time away. The highest delight both to women and men, is to swing about in their hammocks, and smoke cigars. Gambling to excess, and tormenting of bulls, are their principal amusements. Religion has no beneficial effect upon their morals; if they commit sins, they confess them and are forgiven. To all this is joined an apathy which is astonishing. Liveliness forms no part of their character; on the contrary, they generally speak in a mild and drawling tone, which gives the highest idea of indifference, and almost of a disinclination to the trouble of opening their mouths. When a little ani-

mated, however, this softness in the voice of the women, it must be confessed, is not unpleasing, until its monotony becomes tiresome to the ear of an European.

I have not entered into a detail of the various races which people this country, as they are composed of the same materials which exist in all the Spanish colonies of South America ; and have been frequently and accurately described. Over all, as is well known, until very lately the European was considered as preeminent, frequently without any just cause. Next in rank were the Creoles, or descendants of European parents, and then a long succession of the various shades of mixture with Indian or African blood. The late revolutions in this country have abolished some of these distinctions, and seem likely in time to destroy still more; the probable consequences of which are worthy of serious attention, and which we shall now proceed to consider.



## CHAP. VII.

*Civil War.—General Reflections.*

**F**ROM the beginning of the insurrection a strong party appears to have existed in all parts of South America, determined to carry every thing to extremities, and not to stop short of a declaration of absolute independence. This determination was but thinly veiled in the various proclamations which were issued; and from the violent invectives which they contained against the ancient Spanish government, the result became early evident to every unprejudiced mind. The professions of attachment to Ferdinand the Seventh, as to the common monarch of the Spanish dominions, were cold and theatrical. The public mind was prepared step by step for bolder measures, and, at length, on the 1st of July 1811, the Congress of Venezuela came to the resolution of declaring their provinces wholly in-

dependent of every foreign power, and renouncing all allegiance to the Spanish Monarch. When we consider that the 4th of July is the day which the inhabitants of the United States celebrate as the anniversary of their independence, we cannot regard this coincidence of dates as altogether accidental. The decree was not promulgated until some days subsequently.

This step was so far decisive as to bring to the test all those holding public employments, who were averse to the measure. In consequence, many men of honour and abilities resigned their offices; others demanded passports to quit the country; and the Spaniards and Canary Islanders, losing all hopes, formed conspiracies in Caracas, Cumana, and Barcelona. The plots were discovered. Ten of the ringleaders were executed: and subsequently five more at once in Caracas. Many of the remainder were conveyed to unhealthy prisons, excluded from the light, and where all communication with their friends was cut off. Those who had not been implicated, alarmed at what they

witnessed, and exposed to daily insults, hastily disposed of their property, and every vessel bound to the United States, or to the neighbouring islands, was filled with these men, thus twice exiles. By this means a formidable body is gradually accumulating at Puerto Rico, Cuba and Curacao, from which, dismal accounts are spread in all directions of the cruelty and injustice of the new government of Venezuela. Nothing appeared to me more remarkable than the tameness with which such numerous and respectable classes of men suffered themselves to be sent away from a country, which they had so long enriched by their labours. Had they united together to assert their privileges, and acted with common prudence and courage, the existence of the new government would have been endangered, had it attempted violently to oppress them. On the contrary, they first suffered their numbers to be thinned, and their spirits damped by the seizure and exile of their principal members, and then attempted insurrections which exposed the whole to just suspicion, and involved them

in one common ruin. Now when away from the scene of action, they are loud and rancorous in their expressions of revenge, and exult in the hope of one day seeing the authors of their misfortunes punished. But it is now too late; they have thrown away all their advantages, and the day of their power is past. The French nobility and royalists would have totally changed the character of the revolution, had they remained at home. As soon as they passed the frontiers, they became confounded with the common mass of enemies, and possessed no more power than any other equal number of armed men.

Early in the revolution of Caracas, the Junta, formed for temporary purposes, urged the assembling of a general congress. The President of this Junta, Don Martin Tovar y Ponte, was respectable for his patriotism, and for the immense property staked by his family on the issue of the revolution; but he had no ambition to act a higher part than that of having taken a post of great responsibility in time of danger. After the congress had been assembled, it soon be-

same evident that a body of representatives so collected was unfit for wielding at once the legislative and executive powers. The latter was therefore placed in the hands of three men, supposed to be the most capable of using it with effect, and at the same time with moderation. It was said, however, that before many months had elapsed, the congress wished to reclaim this dangerous and tempting gift, and had already experienced how much easier it was to bestow power than to resume it. Be this as it may, the Triumvirate certainly gave greater energy and promptness to public measures, and would doubtless have carried on the system of Government with still more effect, but for the frequent interposition of one of those self-constituted bodies, which arise in times of ferment and confusion, and in which alone they can exist.

This is a heterogeneous assembly calling itself the Patriotic Society, which regularly meets to harangue on political topics, and frequently to discuss with very little reserve the measures, or what, according to them, ought to be the measures, of their own

government. A considerable number of Frenchmen are members of this Society, where they frequently appear conspicuously. The whole indeed bears strong marks of French origin, and has a close affinity to the memorable Jacobin Club, both in the wildness and extravagance of the harangues which are frequently delivered, and in its influence over the measures of government. About six months after his arrival, General Miranda was elected President, and immediately introduced as members four Mulattoes, to the great satisfaction of all lovers of real equality. Nothing farther need be said of the composition of this club; nor will it after this be a matter of surprize, that the conduct of England should be a subject of frequent reprehension. So far has this been carried, that shortly before the declaration of absolute independence, a regular deputation from the society was suffered to pronounce before the congress, a long philippic against the tyrants of the seas. It is hardly possible to impute this step, so highly and openly impolitic on the part of the congress, to any other cause

than the fear of offending the Patriotic Society by a refusal. Yet were it not for the interference of Great Britain, all the ports of Venezuela would have been strictly blockaded by Spanish ships of war from Puerto Rico and Cuba; an interference, the propriety of which we shall hereafter discuss.

In this country, after the examples which we have witnessed of the pernicious influence of political clubs, thus constituted, it is unnecessary to say any thing farther of the Patriotic Society of Caracas. Its power is already great; what effects it may hereafter produce is uncertain, although it can hardly fail to become a powerful tool in the hands of skilful ambition. Violent demands were at one time made against the members of the first Junta; but, fortunately, without leading to any farther consequences, than a few idle speeches. We must now turn to the still more unpleasant theme of civil war, and to narrate some of the first effects of those precipitate declarations, which Venezuela will probably long have cause to repent.

Among the first measures of the new government, was the sending an armed force against the city of Coro, which had refused to join their cause. This force, commanded by the Marquis del Toro, was beaten by the Coreans, with considerable loss. To lighten the disgrace, the Marquis absurdly insinuated, in his public dispatches, that the enemy had been directed and armed by the English. After this check, affairs remained quiet for some time, and the army of the West was seldom mentioned. When the congress, at Caracas, decreed the independence of the Provinces, all were not prepared for so decisive a measure, which seemed unnecessarily to tear asunder the ties which still rendered Spain to many an object of respect, and, under its present circumstances, of pity. The kingdom of Santa Fé, or Cundinamarca, still lingered in its attachment to Ferdinand the Seventh. Guayana continued loyal; whilst Valencia, occupying so important a position on the lake, to which it gives name, openly proclaimed that Monarch, and was joined by an entire bat-



tion of *Pardos*, or people of colour. In July, 1811, General Miranda marched against that city, with what troops he had collected, expecting to be reinforced on the march. He passed the mountains of San Pedro, and descending into the valleys of Aragua, advanced to La Victoria, through a country, generally friendly or quiet. From the heights of La Victoria, he descended into the immense plains of Valencia. At the little village of Mariara, where the road passes close to the lake, the first blood was spilt, in this second civil war. The Valencians had equipped several small gun boats, which had taken their station here, and were concealed by the bushes, and tall reeds, which grow along the banks of the lake. The officer, commanding the advanced guard of the Caraquenians,\* had neglected to reconnoitre, and the troops were advancing in columns, when they received several unexpected and well aimed discharges. They succeeded in driving away the gun-boats, but not without some loss, and met with no farther opposition,

\* Los Caraquenos, or people of Caracas.

till they reached the Morro, a round height and pass, which, in a great measure, commands Valencia. Here the Valencians made a stand; but, after a desperate resistance, were forced to retire, leaving several pieces of cannon, and their chief engineer, in the hands of the enemy. They rallied at the entrance of the city, but were soon attacked, and driven into the great square, where they again rallied, and were again dispersed, with the loss of all their artillery. The triumph of the Caraquenians now seemed complete, and they were congratulating themselves on their victory, when a shower of balls, from the flat roofs and strongly grated windows of the neighbouring houses, convinced them fatally of their mistake. They attempted to penetrate into the houses, and to advance against the barracks, where most of the battalions of people of colour were posted, but were everywhere repulsed. At length, after being in possession of the town for ten hours, they were obliged to retreat, leaving behind all the artillery which they had previously taken; several prisoners, and upwards of

two hundred men killed, or badly wounded, including several officers. They did not stop till they arrived at Guacara, a distance of more than four leagues. In this affair both parties appear to have fought with courage; but the people of colour, on the side of the Valencians, with peculiar animosity. General Miranda exposed himself considerably, and gave his orders with coolness. He escaped unhurt, but several individuals of the most respectable families of Caracas were killed or maimed. The number of the assailants was upwards of two thousand six hundred, whilst the highest reasonable estimate did not rate their opponents at more than seven hundred armed men.

Such was the commencement of this civil war of Venezuela, in which the justice of the attack upon Valencia seems more doubtful, even than its policy. Were not human nature every where the same, we might be struck at seeing the Caraqueñians, in the very infancy of their republic, refuse to others the same liberty of choosing their form of government, which they

had so zealously asserted for themselves; and that their first act should be an attack upon their brethren, merely for adhering to their lawful monarch. Such, however, appears to have been the history of man, in every age, alternately oppressing and oppressed: but always generous in granting to his fellows full liberty of thinking the same way as himself.

As reinforcements continued to be sent from various quarters to the Caraquenian army, whilst none joined the Valencians, it soon became evident which way the contest, for some time at least, was to terminate. In little more than a fortnight, General Miranda was enabled once more to advance, with upwards of five thousand men, whilst the enemy, chiefly through the desertion of the whites, were reduced to less than five hundred.

On the 8th August, he drove in all the advanced posts, and fixed his head-quarters at the Morro, close to Valencia. Taught by former experience, he proceeded with caution against a town, still better prepared than before for making an

obstinate resistance, entrenchments having been thrown up in the great square, and in the various avenues to it. From the smallness of their numbers, however, the Valencians were soon obliged to abandon the suburbs, and concentrate themselves in the great square, where, being attacked on eight different points at the same time, they were at length closely hemmed in. Here, being without water and provisions, they surrendered at discretion, on the 13th August. The small flotilla, which had been equipped with so much labour, on the lake, was also given up. Thus ended, for the present, the war with Valencia; but civil rancour had not subsided. According to public accounts, plots and conspiracies either shortly afterwards took place, or were imputed to the inhabitants of this unfortunate city as a ground for proscriptions and executions. Whatever may be the present state of things, it is evident that the seeds of hatred and discontent must be deeply and widely sown. Caracas appears to have assumed too much to herself, and, under false ideas of promptness and

energy, to have pursued a conduct which may bear the imputation of rashness and cruelty. What right, it may be said, has that city to dictate laws to Coro and Valencia, and, in case of their refusal, to march armies against them? The right of force, it will be answered, and of sound policy, which, after the steps already taken, render it necessary, as much as possible, to shut the door against the introduction of foreign troops. Be it so; but cease then in congresses and patriotic societies to declaim against Europe, for vindicating acts of blood, by the laws of policy; and do not be surprised if, by the same rules, a foreign force should justify its intrusion upon the territory of Caracas.

While these occurrences were taking place in Valencia, the army of Coro had advanced, but too late, for its relief, as far as San Felipe on the west; and the Guayanese were extending their incursions, nearly to Calvario, on the east. The Government of Caracas, sensible of the necessity of great exertions, instituted a tribunal of vigilance, which paid domiciliary

visits, and ordered arrests, upon the slightest grounds of suspicion. The theatre was shut, to prevent all assembling of the people; and parties, balls, and concerts were no longer heard of. All the male population was armed, and regularly exercised; and it became fashionable for those of the greatest distinction to sleep at the barracks. To go out of town, even for a few miles, a passport was necessary. The liberty of the press was established, provided religion be not directly touched upon, nor anything inserted, which may be deemed subversive of the system of Venezuela. A law was also published, abolishing torture, which however, of late years, had been wholly disused in the Spanish Colonies. The title of citizen became general, and all hereditary titles were dropped, even although congress had passed no decree to that effect. To all these obvious imitations of the early measures of the French Revolution, was added another, on the part of Government, of later times. In the eighth number of the *Publicista*, edited by the Secretary of State, by order of congress,

appear the notes of the *Moniteur*, and Cobbett's reflections on the speech of the Prince Regent, at the opening of Parliament. The speech itself is left out.

General Miranda, although at the head of the Patriotic Society, and of the army, did not escape the effects of that spirit, which, in times of popular commotion, it is so much easier to excite than to regulate or restrain. After the capture of Valencia, he was denounced to the executive as having acted most despotically and tyrannically; and from the childish impetuosity of his temper, it is probable, that the charge was not wholly without foundation. A great part of the complaint may, however, fairly be attributed to those wholesome restrictions, which, in his greater experience, he would find it necessary to enforce; but which might appear harsh and useless to the new champions of liberty. He was also accused of imprudence in his first precipitate attack upon Valencia, which was compared to that of Whitelock on Buenos Ayres. It is evident, however, that these denunciations of Commanders in Chief



cannot be of long continuance. Should they be carried much farther, they must quickly lead to anarchy, or despotism. Meantime, the injury done to the country, by the unsettled state of affairs, has been infinite. Exclusive of other evils, men were withdrawn from agriculture in all directions, and sent by force to the army; in consequence of which, many valuable crops, particularly of indigo, were left to perish on the ground, for want of hands to gather them. Such have been some of the particular effects of the revolution in Venezuela. Let us now endeavour to trace it back to the common source of all the late insurrections in South America.

The Colonies of the various European nations, settled in the new world, serve to display at once the influence of national character derived from language and habits, and the alteration induced by difference of climate and circumstances. However changed from their native stock, they differ still more from each other, and are easily traced through all their ramifications, to the great sources from which they are

derived. No study can be more interesting to a philosopher, than the pursuit of these diversities. He will trace manners and laws which now mark the inhabitants of a great portion of South America, through Spain, up to the tents of the Arabs; and the freedom which reigns in the United States, through England, to the forests of ancient Germany.

As long as the different European colonies formed constituent parts of the empires by which they were founded, their history was involved in that of the parent state. But the revolt of the Anglo-Americans was the beginning of a new system. It was then that the revolutions of Caracas, Mexico, and the River Plate, commenced. It was then that the real wars between Europe and America began, wars to which, in some shape or other, the present generation will see no end. Had the English colonists been unsuccessful, their failure might have retarded, but could never have prevented, the final emancipation of America from the direct authority of European governments. But the issue of their

struggle holds out an example of success, too brilliant not to be imitated, and too momentous in its consequences ever to be forgotten. The magic sound of liberty has gone forth throughout the whole American Continent, and its effects are likely to be the more tremendous, from the general ignorance which prevails as to the true import of that mighty word. Could the Spaniards drive the invaders from their Peninsula, they would exclaim, that they at length were free, although they might still remain slaves to a bad internal government, and to superstition. In like manner, the colonists call themselves free, when they have dispossessed their ancient masters of their power, and placed it in other hands, although the mode of using that power may remain essentially the same. At present, they look no farther. Men are taken up and handcuffed, and sent to the army to fight for liberty, as they were in former times to defend the glory of their Monarch and of Spain. The old weights of the machine are taken away, and others substituted; but all the springs, and inte-

rior movements, remain the same. Should Senates, and Congresses, and Juntas, rule with despotic sway, in what respect will they be preferable to governors, and captains general?

The Patriots of South America are, on all occasions, fond of appealing to the United States, as an example, and seem inclined very closely to imitate the form of their constitution; in both of which they are perhaps erroneous. The maintenance of a particular constitution depends more on the general feelings and spirit of a people, than upon the mere form itself of that constitution; in which respect, there is as great a difference between the English and Spanish Americans, as in their domestic manners. Liberty, to be truly supported, must be truly understood, and England has only purchased that knowledge at the expense of much blood; and centuries of internal warfare. Any nation which should adopt the form of the English constitution, without some portion of its dear bought experience, would not therefore be free. In like manner, the circumstances under

which the Anglo-Americans asserted their independence were widely different from those in which the colonists of Spain were placed. England was in a situation of unexampled prosperity. Her power was dreaded, or her name respected, throughout the world. The last war, in which she had been engaged, had been glorious and successful; and France, in the demolition of the harbour of Dunkirk had submitted to one of the most humiliating conditions that had ever been imposed on a conquered nation. Yet, in the face of all this power, the English colonists did not hesitate to take up arms, in defence of what they considered as their native rights. After all appeals had been made in vain, they declared themselves independent, before they were certain of the support of a single foreign nation, and thus braved the whole colossal power of Great Britain, which they, more than any other people, had been accustomed to admire and respect.

The circumstances under which the Spanish colonies have declared their in-

dependence form a striking contrast to the former. While the Monarchy of Spain was entire, every species of tyranny and oppression was submitted to. Looms and vineyards were destroyed, lest they should interfere with the industry of the mother country, in this instance, falsely so called; and when Miranda landed in Venezuela with an armed force, professing that he came to break the chains of the colonists, not one joined his standard, nor was the smallest movement made in his favour. But no sooner was Spain perfidiously robbed of her Monarch, and her territory overrun by hostile armies, than the spirit of insurrection began to break out. In proportion as her difficulties increased, the American Patriots continued to take bolder measures; and give hints of their final determination. At length, when Spain appeared plunged in the lowest depths of misery, short of total subjugation, and when even her enemies might have shed a tear over her misfortunes, the colonists throw off all the flimsy veils of attachment to a common

monarch, or a mother country, and declare their absolute and complete independence.

It appears, then; that the Patriots of Spanish America have no just grounds for making a comparison of their conduct with that of the founders of the United States. The circumstances throughout are totally and essentially different. Their cause, however, is not, on that account, the less just; or rather, it may fairly be asserted, to be more so, in proportion as the wrongs and oppressions, which the Spanish colonies have suffered, are infinitely greater than were ever attempted, or even imagined, towards the English. But even this will hardly account for the different conduct of the contending parties, for which we must have recourse to the marked difference of the English and Spanish characters, as exemplified both in the mother countries and their colonies. During the fierce civil war, of seven years' continuance, which ended in the establishment of the United States, scarcely a single individual perished on either side, except in battle. An honour-

able and decisive testimony of the general humanity of the English character. In Spanish America, on the contrary, in the short space of three years, we have seen murders, under the name of legal executions, precede and follow the slaughter of battle. Streets and private houses have been stained with blood; human heads suspended in cages, at the entrance of great towns; unwholesome prisons crammed with victims; and the charge of perfidy and cruelty urged by both parties, and with equal justice.

Within these few years, a new spirit has arisen in America, which is spreading with the rapidity of a religious fanaticism. I mean an affectation of total independence, as Americans, in every respect, not merely politically, but even to a fastidiousness of acknowledging any obligations to Europe. We revisit with delight the shores of Greece and Italy, and think it no disgrace to acknowledge all the benefits derived by our rude forefathers, and even by ourselves, from these great sources of taste and science. Not so with this modern and numerous



sect of Americans, who in spite of common sense, would fain persuade themselves and others, that arts and sciences, liberty and laws, are indigenous to the new world. Hence the proposal seriously made in the United States of adopting a new language, or changing the name of the present to that of the Freedonian, that they might not any more be under the sad necessity of speaking English. Hence the pity with which the Spanish Americans affect to deplore the fate of the Aborigines of their country, and in all their new constitutions invite the Indians, hitherto treated with so much contempt, to a nominal participation of their privileges. In numerous and increasing instances, this spirit rises to a species of fanatical hatred against Europeans, who are termed ferocious, cruel, and perfidious, whilst the Americans are magnanimous, mild, and just. In others, this bitterness is vented against the subjects of the parent state solely. Thus the English are denominated freebooters, tyrants, and ruffians, by their descendants; and the Spaniards by theirs are contemptuously called

Godos, or Goths; and all the cruelties committed since the days of the first conquerors are heaped upon the heads of the present generation, while the term of *Madre Patria*, or Mother Country, is used sneeringly, and by way of reproach.

From a consideration of this spirit, so prevalent, and so powerful, we are irresistibly led to conclude that America can never again be permanently brought under the dominion of European powers. That period has passed, or is fast passing away; and although much blood yet remains to be shed, the divisions established by nature must at length prevail. They are deceived, however, who thence conclude that the era of American happiness shall immediately commence, and that henceforward liberty and peace shall form a recompense for what they affect to term the Iron Sceptre of three Ages. But these ages were ages of peace, and rapid improvement in population and agriculture. The greater part of the vast continent of America acknowledged one Sovereign, spoke one principal language, and enjoyed internal quiet. Now the scene

is to be changed. Feuds have arisen between provinces, and towns, and villages, and have been followed by bloodshed. Revenge rankles between Monte Video and Buenos Ayres; Caracas and Valencia and Coro; Mexico and numerous interior towns. The Creoles have supplanted the European Spaniards; for a short time every inferior rank feels elevated in the scale, but how long will they remain contented with a single step? and what will be the consequences of restraining them in their desire of advancing farther? These are not difficult to foresee. Discontent and civil war. America will become divided into a vast variety of petty States and Governments. A boundless field will be opened for talents and exertion, and European Warriors will repair to a country where rewards almost equal to those of the first conquerors await them. As individuals, they will arise to eminence and power, but Europe, as a whole, is about to lose her despotic sway for ever. The immediate descendants of Europeans in America hear without emotion of the land of their forefathers. They

acquire mountains, and streams, and forests of their own, which are endeared to them by early recollection; and every soldier transported to effect conquests in America becomes a source of increase to the country which he is sent to subdue.

It is evident therefore that the various revolutions in the European colonies in America have originated in principles and are affected by causes which are common to all. It has been, and is every where, the native population, struggling for the possession of power against foreigners, who, by appealing to arms, have irreparably weakened the ties which so long gave them a powerful influence over the minds of the colonists. In Spanish America, it may be said, that the slave has dared to lift his hand against his master, and in most instances has not merely escaped unpunished, but has met with high rewards. The examples have been too numerous and too tempting, not, in time, to be universally followed; and then what power can retain in subjection this immense continent, which includes so many climates, and will ere long

be peopled by numerous and powerful nations ?

What has been the conduct of Great Britain towards the Spanish colonies, during the important period of a few preceding years ? What has been her language at a crisis, which must have so great an influence on the future destinies of the new world, already deeply stained with blood ? Simply this ; " Let us trade with you." All our negociations in South America may be reduced to this proposition as their great end and object. We make general and cold protestations of our anxiety to reconcile the colonies to Spain ; we hope matters will not be carried to extremities, whilst they are slaughtering each other ; and reason upon the subject with a precision which is truly admirable. But talk of our commerce, and we are all fire. " Whatever may happen among yourselves," says our Admiral in the River Plate, " I hope British commerce will suffer no interruption." The Spanish Government declared the ports of Venezuela in a state of blockade, and contrived to send a naval force to render this

decrees not altogether inefficient. The commanders of this force were soon given to understand, that the British trade was not to be disturbed. But if we interfered between an armed Spanish force and her colonies for the benefit of our trade, why did no British messenger of peace appear on the plains of Venezuela to prevent, or at least to mitigate, the fate of the unfortunate city of Valencia, and attempt to arrest the progress of civil war?

We must not therefore be surprized, whatever be the issue of the present disturbances, if the conduct of Britain should hereafter be attributed rather to the calculating prudence of a commercial people, than to the magnanimous forbearance of a great power. Our interference in the affairs of Spanish America has, in general, been too obviously selfish, as far as it went, to render us the friends of either party. The idea of not interfering at all was great and noble, but it should have been strictly pursued, or abandoned only for objects of the first necessity. The temporary suspension of a strict intercourse between Cura-

and the rebel ports of Venezuela was not a subject to call for the interference of the British naval power.

There are two means by which a European nation may acquire great political influence in the affairs of the New World, without exercising a direct authority over any part of it. The one is by sedulously cultivating the friendship of such states already formed, or hereafter undoubtedly to be formed, as may seem most likely from their situation to have a decided preponderance in the future destinies of the rising nations of the West. The other is by occupying certain important points, which as yet are neglected or but thinly settled, either by treaty or purchase, and establishing colonies there on principles wholly different from those which have hitherto been pursued in forming foreign settlements. By granting them every assistance, and at the same time disclaiming all authority or interference in their internal regulations, it would be easy to erect states decidedly partial to the mother country in every essential requisite, and between which and the

surrounding colonies permanent jealousies would naturally and inevitably arise. Through them it would be easy to gain a decided influence over great portions of the continent without the odium of direct influence, and to open a vast field to the exertion of European talents without the danger of their being converted into weapons of hostility against the country from which they arose.



## APPENDIX.

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*Extracts of Dispatches from General Miranda.*

**H**AVING to-day arrived at this encampment, and observed the different positions occupied by the troops of the army surrounding Valencia, we saw, with pleasure, that the enemy were confined to one part of the city, having been beaten yesterday evening, and this morning early, on different points, by the divisions which, under the command of Lieut. Col. Jose Marti, Don Antonio Flores, Don Jose Rodriguez, and Major Don Miguel Carabano, attacked them in the valley of Palotal, and on the heights of El Puto and Agua Blanca, which our troops took after a sufficiently obstinate resistance, the enemy leaving on the field of battle twenty five killed and upwards of seventy-five prisoners, with two pieces of cannon, in our

possession. Our troops have already forced their way into one part of the city, towards the quarter of La Candelaria, where we observe several buildings set on fire by them, probably to avoid being annoyed from them by the enemy. To morrow, at break of day, we shall reconnoitre their positions more closely, and the operations already commenced shall be carried on with vigour and unanimity. Our loss in killed and wounded amounts to 1 officer, 1 serjeant, 4 privates killed, and 6 wounded. May God preserve your Excellency many years.

Head quarters at El Morro, opposite Valencia, 9th August, 1811; 8 o'clock at night.

To the Secretary of the war department.

FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA.

## No. II.

This morning, at day-break, as noticed in my former dispatch, we made a general reconnoitring of all the points of the city of Valencia, in which our troops are now established, in order to cut off all communication with the country, and blockade it.

completely. We observed that the enemy, vigorously followed up by our light infantry, were confined to the centre of the city, having abandoned to us all the suburbs, together with another piece of cannon, and eighty-four prisoners. The well-directed fire of our artillery against the market square, and the scarcity of all kinds of provisions, caused by the blockade, has occasioned considerable desertion amongst the enemy, more than fifty having this day come over to our army. Among these we had the satisfaction of seeing Don Francisco Salias, who, whilst acting as our aide-camp, on the 23d of last month, remained prisoner in Valencia. According to his account, he owes his liberty to the famous Eusebio Colmenares, alias El Catire,\* one of the principal chiefs among the insurgents of Valencia, who presented himself, at the same time imploring the pardon of his past offences, in consideration of the service he had done us, in procuring

\* This famous Catire was a noted highway robber; and now I believe holds the rank of Serjeant in the Caraqueñian army.

the liberty of Salias, and what he still could do for his country. For this he solicited no other recompence than the oblivion of his past conduct, which it appeared to me useful and convenient to grant. The adjoined official letter of the chief engineer will show you the works thrown up by him, on the 8th and 9th, against the great square of Valencia; and although we have to day observed the enemy working with the greatest activity, in making new ditches and entrenchments in the principal streets leading to the great square, I should by no means be surprized, from the diminution of the troops defending it, reduced now to a small number, from the great desertion that is observed amongst them through all the outlets towards the country, that we should find it evacuated in two or three days. God preserve your Excellency many years.

Head quarters at El Morro, opposite to Valencia, 10th August, 1811; 8 o'clock at night.

To the Secretary of the war department.

FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA.

## No. III.

Considering that the measures, which we had taken for the blockade and capture of Valencia were now complete, we resolved upon a general and simultaneous attack by all the troops which, for this purpose, had been drawn together from different parts of the province. This attack commenced at 2 o'clock yesterday afternoon, on eight different points; which distracting the attention of the enemy rendered the resistance less vigorous. It lasted, however, till nightfall, when our troops, having driven the enemy into their last entrenchments in the great square, we remained in our positions till day-break, the troops taking some rest during the night. At dawn, the attack re-commenced in the same order, and on the same points, with still greater vigour; so that, at ten in the morning, the enemy, whose supply of water we had cut off, proposed terms of capitulation. These were denied them, until they should lay down their arms, as we had formerly experienced

the violation of a solemn capitulation. They were, therefore, obliged to submit, leaving to our discretion the terms of humanity and generosity with which I propose to treat them, our troops taking possession of the square, arms, and artillery, at twelve of the day, when we entered it, and the Venezuelan flag was displayed. The flotilla, composed of four or six small armed vessels, which infested the lake of Valencia and its vicinity, surrendered also to the arms of Venezuela yesterday, at four in the afternoon, after a short negotiation, delivering up at the same time their artillery, arms, vessels, and other stores, and implements of war. Thus all the people and towns, which I found in a state of insurrection and war with Caracas, on the 21st of July last, when I arrived in this part of the country, are now subdued or pacified. In a subsequent dispatch, which shall be sent off to-morrow, will be mentioned the small number of our killed and wounded in this warm action, which covered our troops with glory and military virtues. Col. D. Simon Bolivar, who, as

well as his companions, has distinguished himself in the various functions committed to his charge, in these patriotic labours; as also my aid-de-camp, Capt. D. Francisco Salias, who, after a severe imprisonment, is restored to his country, will inform your Excellency of some other particulars, which the shortness of time does not permit me to mention at present. God preserve your Excellency many years.

Head quarters at Valencia, 13th August,  
1811.

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To the Secretary of the war department.

FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA.

#### No. IV.

*Extract from the Government Gazette of  
20th August, 1811.*

#### SURRENDER OF VALENCIA.

The insurrection of this city is an event that has occupied the attention of the government, and attracted that of Caracas

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and the interior towns. In effect, it was necessary to shew that the wicked Cortabarría, the agent destined by the Regency of Cadiz to re-establish the Spanish tyranny in America, seeing that it was impossible to restore it by means of deceit and flattery, had put in action other means, which, although slower, as he says, are not therefore inefficacious. This malignant man has introduced into the Venezuelan territory, artful emissaries, who, seducing and corrupting some of the inhabitants, have lighted up the flames of discord, by gross falsehoods and vile calumnies, which some incautiously believed, and others upheld through malevolence. The minds of the inhabitants being thus disposed, it was spread throughout Valencia, that in Caracas there was no religion, that they did not baptize their children, and that the Reverend Father in God, the Archbishop, was wounded and a prisoner, with other puerilities, impostures, and falsehoods, maintained by those very persons, who, from their ministry, were bound circumspectly to investigate the truth, and to undeceive



the people, in so important and delicate a matter. From a criminal ignorance, from a disorderly ambition, and, above all, from the effects produced by the rancour of our enemies, they found means to gain the ascendancy over the minds of the unfortunate Valencians, to such a degree, as to bring them into a rebellion as afflicting to Caracas as fatal to its instigators, who are about to be sacrificed to the public security, and to the honour of the Venezuelan Confederacy, greatly compromised by the sedition of Valencia. For this, it was necessary to take up arms, and present our forces before that unfortunate city with no other object than to cause knowledge and truth to be respected, and thereby to free it from the horrors of anarchy, which is the patrimony that now remains in America to the agents of the Spanish government. Nothing was farther from Caracas than aggression and war, since nothing was farther from its government than the obstinacy and insane fury with which Cortabarría's Chiefs had resolved to sacrifice to their ambition the simplicity and ig-

norance of the unhappy Valencians. Our troops set out from Valencia, expecting that reason, truth, and the ties of fraternity, would have more power than the sword, grasped by the hand of justice, in despite of the impulses of friendship. The government was preparing for amnesty and oblivion, trusting that the triumph of our arms in Valencia would be as speedy as pacific, and that, on the return of an expedition, dictated by the general good, the conquered would come, arm in arm, with the victors, to chaunt before the Tutelar Deity of Venezuela hymns of reconciliation, under the auspices of independence. All this was frustrated by the dark designs with which Cortabarría and his agents tried to embitter the delights of our liberty, which they now found themselves unable to destroy; and the sedition, commenced in imposture and bad faith, had recourse for its support to calumny, perfidy, and the dissolution of every social right. The factious seizing the reins of government, and this being composed of as many perverse and ignorant persons as had suffered

themselves to be seduced by the malific genius of the Pacificator of Venezuela, the city was given up to disorder, and to the insolence and depredations of a soldiery, released from all subordination, and inflamed by the promise of a recompence out of the property of the pacific citizens, who had shut themselves within their houses, fled to the mountains, or taken refuge under the banners of Venezuela. In the horrid silence of a deserted and desolate city, the partizans of tyranny had founded their empire, and nothing was seen in Valencia but blasphemies against Caracas, precautions and decrees of horror and perfidy, and the calculations, by which the seduced soldier prepared to divide the patrimony of his fellow citizens, in recompence for having prostituted himself to forward the sanguinary purposes of the enemies of his country.

Such were the evils, which the army of Venezuela proposed to itself to prevent, when it arrived at the advanced guards of Mariara, where the first blood of the warriors of independence was shed by the gal-

ley slaves of tyranny. Even after this little triumph, the commanders of our forces still aimed at reconciliation, restraining their resentment of the injury, and despising the temptations of victory and superiority. For this were two capitulations agreed to, dictated by fury, accepted by good faith, and violated by perfidy, till at length the solicitation of some virtuous, and now undeceived inhabitants of Valencia, made it necessary to draw near with the army, to restrain the disorders of anarchy, the licentiousness, pillage, and brutality, which alone gave impulse to the Valencian sedition.

Preceded by moderation and conviction, the hosts of Venezuela traversed the delightful vallies of Aragoa. The contagion being weak, in proportion to its distance from the principal focus, it was easy to undeceive and bring over to our cause those, who, to their grief, found themselves separated from it through fear or weakness. Victoria and Maracay, incorruptible in their fidelity, had already stopped the progress of the evil, from which, very shortly, were

freed San Joaquin, Guacara, and los Guayos; but the intrepid vigilance of our military commanders was not content with this, and almost at the same time, were wrested from the combined conspiracy the ports of Ocumare and Cata, intended to facilitate the landing of troops brought in Cortabarría's vessels, or the flight of the iniquitous agents of the ruin of Valencia. With all these advantageous combinations, the conquerors of union and peace arrived in the vicinity of Valencia, and the troops halted at the advanced post of El Morro, waiting the result of the last capitulation, violated, as well as the others, which with their answers are in possession of the public. Honour and safety, now twice endangered by generosity and moderation, dictated the attack and capture of the Morro, and the troops animated with this fresh triumph, suffered themselves to be carried by the impulses of glory, and the desire of peace, as far as Valencia, believing that their presence and their previous successes would suffice to undeceive their misled fellow countrymen, to terrify their barbarous

and unnatural seducers, to re-establish order, conquer tranquillity, spare bloodshed, and limit all the evils of a civil war to the trifling and indispensable attacks at Mariara and El Morro. The occurrences in the great square of Valencia will be a record to eternity for America, to remind her of the last days of the gloomy dominion, substituted by Spain to the iron sceptre of three ages, to deform the philanthropic revolution of Venezuela, superior to the impotent efforts, and the prophetic combinations of the diplomatic incendiaries, sent by the Regency to set the new world in flames. There was seen the valiant and generous American, impelled by the desire of liberty to be sacrificed by his own brethren, serving under the satellites of Tyranny, headed by the very men who have devoured our substance, and sustained and encouraged by the ministers of the holy religion which is venerated by Venezuela as the tutelary deity, and impregnable bulwark, of its liberty and justice. From the convent of Saint Francis, proceeded the balls which cut short the glorious career of

the Caraqueñian warriors, which mutilated chiefs, the honour and hopes of our country, which covered the patriots with grief, and committed all the patricides that have excited the just vengeance of the government. Every house was an arsenal, whence rage and perfidy, goaded on by the European band, sacrificed with impunity the pacific soldiers, who believed Valencia to be already under the empire of law, justice, and liberty, which brought them from their hearths to perish within the precincts of a town of Venezuela, even by the hands of those who form a very worthy and interesting part of our confederacy. Such is the barbarous revenge taken by those, who are now convinced that we can never return to be their slaves. Pressed on all sides by ingratitude and perfidy, and exposed to the danger of being uselessly exterminated, our troops resolved to abandon the city to its fate, whilst the army, now undeceived, prepared to enforce respect to what unsuspecting confidence had hazarded. The first chastisement that Valencia suffered, was the withdrawing of the army. The revolt-

ed, grown insolent with the ephemeral triumph of treachery, made the populace believe that our prudence was cowardice, and that the perfidious efforts of despair were valour and energy. Whilst the troops of liberty were preparing to regain the momentary losses which the honour, the tranquillity, and the glory of Venezuela had suffered in the great square of Valencia, sedition set loose all its resources, and displayed all the horrors of anarchy. In the mean time, an unbridled multitude plundered, insulted, and destroyed whatever the discipline of the Venezuelan army had respected. Every day a new government was formed, the principals calumniated each other, they forged new impostures against Caracas, they dictated captious and ridiculous conventions and capitulations, while trenches were dug, the flat roofs of the houses converted into esplanades, and cannon placed at the entrance of the streets, Emissaries dressed in the habits of St. Francis were sent to stir up the neighbouring cities; one partizan was substituted for another, those who were deposed fled;



robbery and murder were incited; the borders of the lake were infested by a flotilla of the conspirators; the money was buried; the prudent part of the community emigrated; and the rebels defied the army with insults, sarcasms, calumnies, and impostures.

In this horrible situation remained the ill-fated Valencia, until the 13th August, when the army resolved to put an end at once to an example, as fatal to America, as it was deplorable to Venezuela. Attacked at eight different points, even yet the rebels relied upon their obstinacy; until confined to the great square, they attempted to restrain our fury by new capitulations. Caraquenian blood, shed on that very spot, even yet smoked under the shade of another capitulation violated at the Morro; nor could moderation again with propriety endanger glory sacrificed in vain to fraternity. The capitulation was rejected, but the door was not closed to generosity towards the humble, and those who repented of their misdeeds. The Venezuelan flag, at length displayed in Valencia by the cham-

pion of the Columbian army, was the place of refuge and the rainbow of peace, which shone in that city after so many days of horror, bloodshed, and devastation. Under protection of the philanthropic measures taken by the Venezuelan General, the good now returned to their peaceful homes; the excesses of the wicked were restrained; the misled are pardoned; the suspected disculpate themselves; and to the empire of the laws, of justice, and of national chastisement, are given up the authors and promoters of misfortune, which will last in Valencia only so long as she delays to bury it in oblivion, by the conduct which Caracas expects from her, after the reproof which has been given to the Valencians, by truth, reason, and energy. Until the facts be collected, the various circumstances arranged, and light thrown upon all, by the extraordinary tribunal of justice, established at head quarters in Valencia, when a circumstantial manifest shall be drawn up, as is due to the public of Venezuela, and to that of all America, on so important an occurrence, this impartial sketch may suf-

fice to prevent the surprize which malice, the sole resource of our enemies, might cause in such as were unacquainted with the origin and the consequences of the fatal imprudence of Valencia.

### No. V.

In the Gazette of the 23d August, General Miranda informs the government, that he had published in Valencia the following dispatch, which produced the best effects, in inducing the inhabitants to return to that city.

### PROCLAMATION.

*The General in Chief of the Armies of Venezuela to the Inhabitants of Valencia.*

The horrors of war have ceased. To the confusion and tumult, in which this ill-fated city was found, have succeeded tranquillity, order, and justice. Perverse men, impelled by their passions, profaned the sacred name of religion, and armed you against your own brethren, to aggrandize

themselves, and satiate their pride and ambition at the cost of your blood. The army of Venezuela came to chastise them, and those wicked authors of your misfortunes cowardly fled, leaving as victims to the fury of war, those who, led astray, had embraced a party contrary to reason, to religion, and even to their own happiness. Inhabitants of Venezuela, power and justice have triumphed. Return then to your firesides, there you will find that protection which you can expect only from your compatriots.

Husbandmen, who have been forced by faction to quit your rural employments, return and fertilize the soil that must maintain you. And you who, under the faith of our promises, have laid down your arms, resume again in security your accustomed occupations. The sword of justice is unsheathed only for the iniquitous and the guilty.

Signed FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA,  
General in Chief.

A true Copy.

Signed, Charles Soublette.

The dispatch goes on to say, "We have decreed, respecting the inhabitants, that such as have taken a principal part in the late revolution shall be kept in arrest. Those who have not borne arms may return in peace to their former occupations; and those who have borne arms against us shall be incorporated in our Veteran Corps, to fill the vacancies occasioned by our losses.—The troops arrived from Puerto Cabello and San Carlos, to co-operate in the capture of Valencia, have begun their march on their return to their respective places."

## No. VI.

The Congress, as soon as they had determined on independence, sent a dispatch to the Governor of Trinidad, announcing the circumstance; to which the following answer was returned.

*Trinidad, 3d August, 1811.*

By the Schooner Mercury, of this port, I have had the honour to receive your Excellencies' dispatches of the 6th ult., which inform me, that on the 5th July the representatives of Venezuela, met together in

Congress, have declared their provinces absolutely independent, and that the promulgation of this declaration was to take place the following day with due solemnity. As this important event was neither foreseen nor expected by his Majesty's government, I have no orders prescribed to me as to the conduct I ought to pursue in so critical a conjuncture, and nothing therefore remains for me to do, but to send without delay copies of these dispatches to his Majesty's Ministers, that they may be presented to the King for his consideration and determination. In the mean time, our commercial relations may proceed as usual, experiencing on my part the same attention and protection as heretofore.

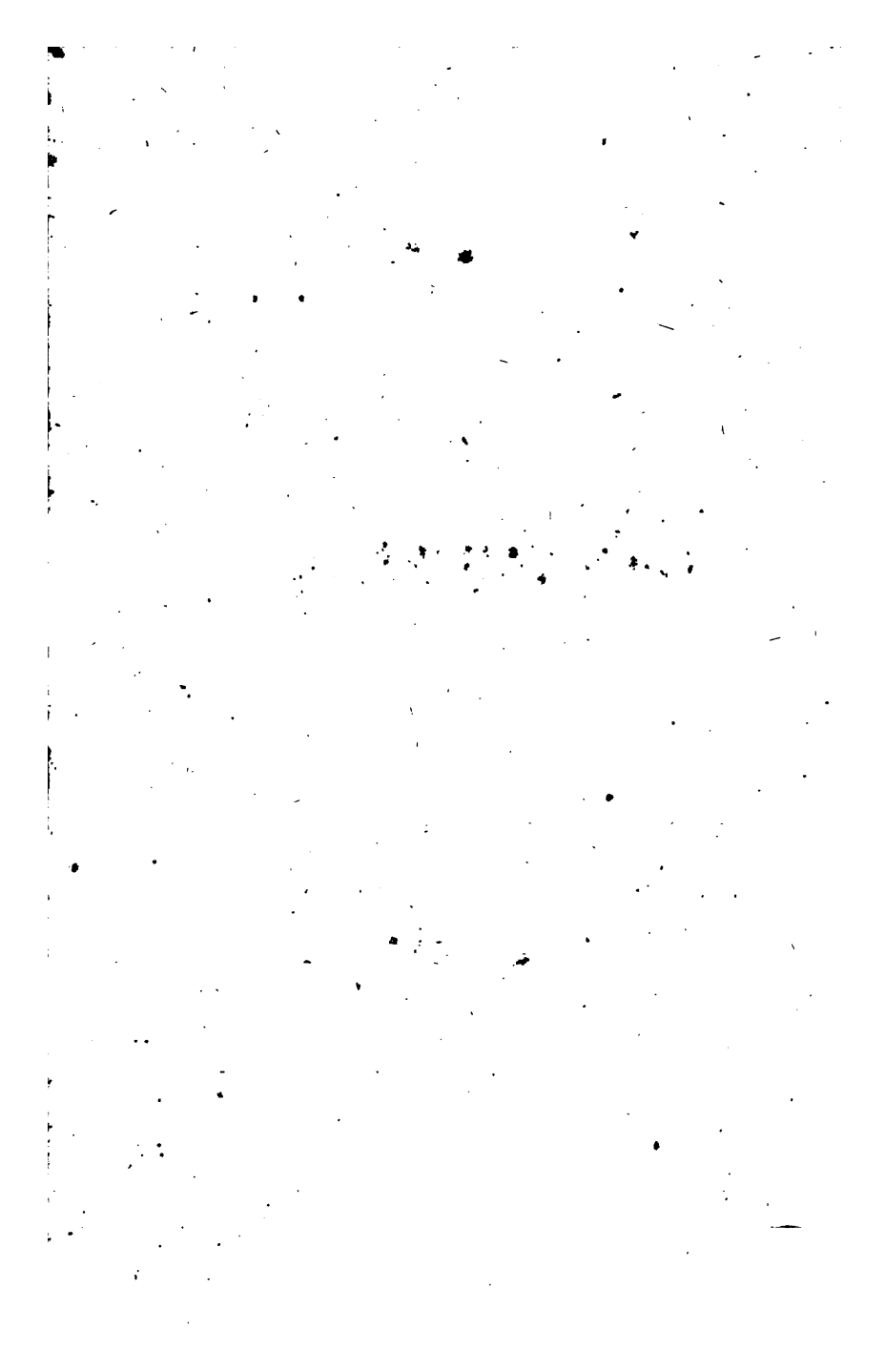
I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration, your Excellencies' attentive and obedient Servant,

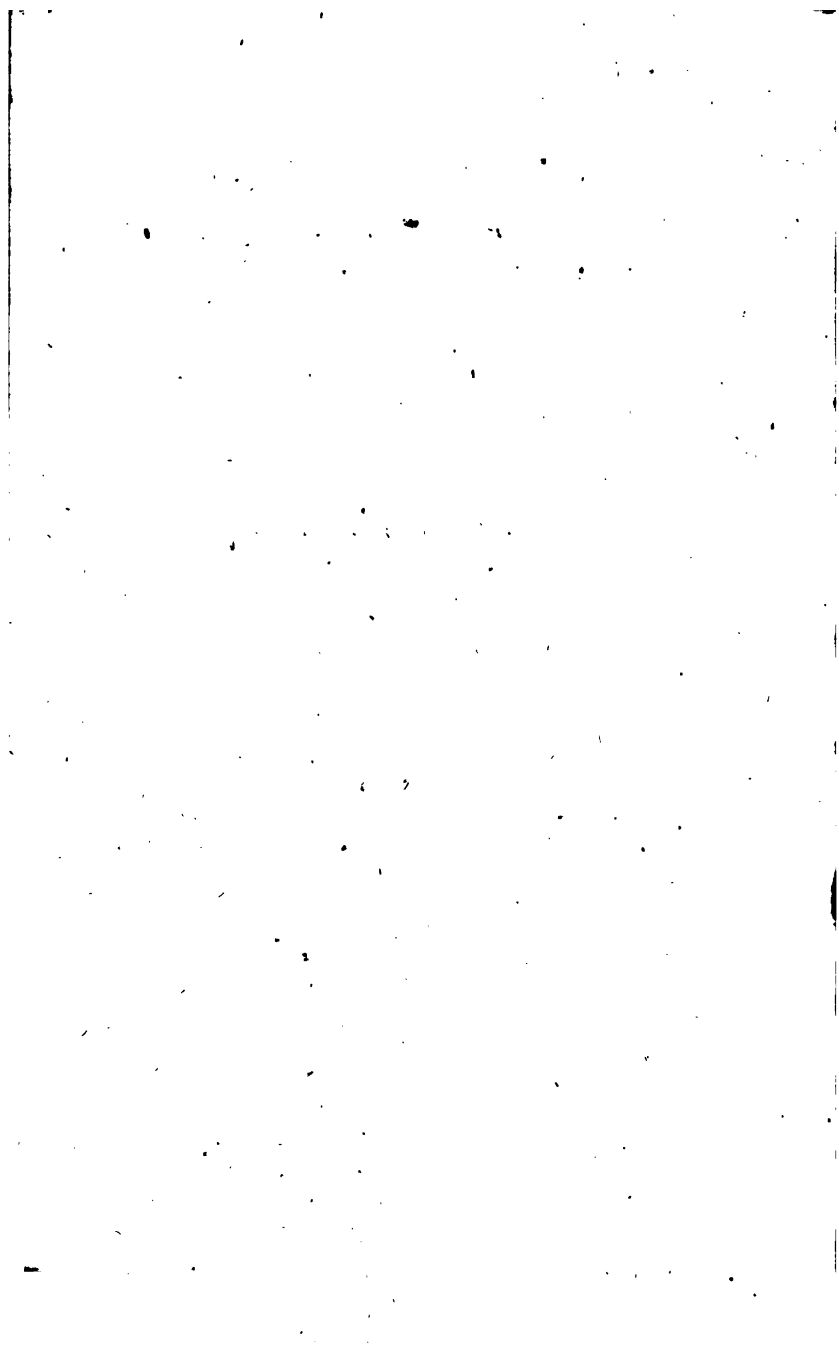
Signed, WILLIAM MUNRO.

To their Excellencies the Supreme Executive Power of the Provinces of Venezuela, in the City of Caracas.

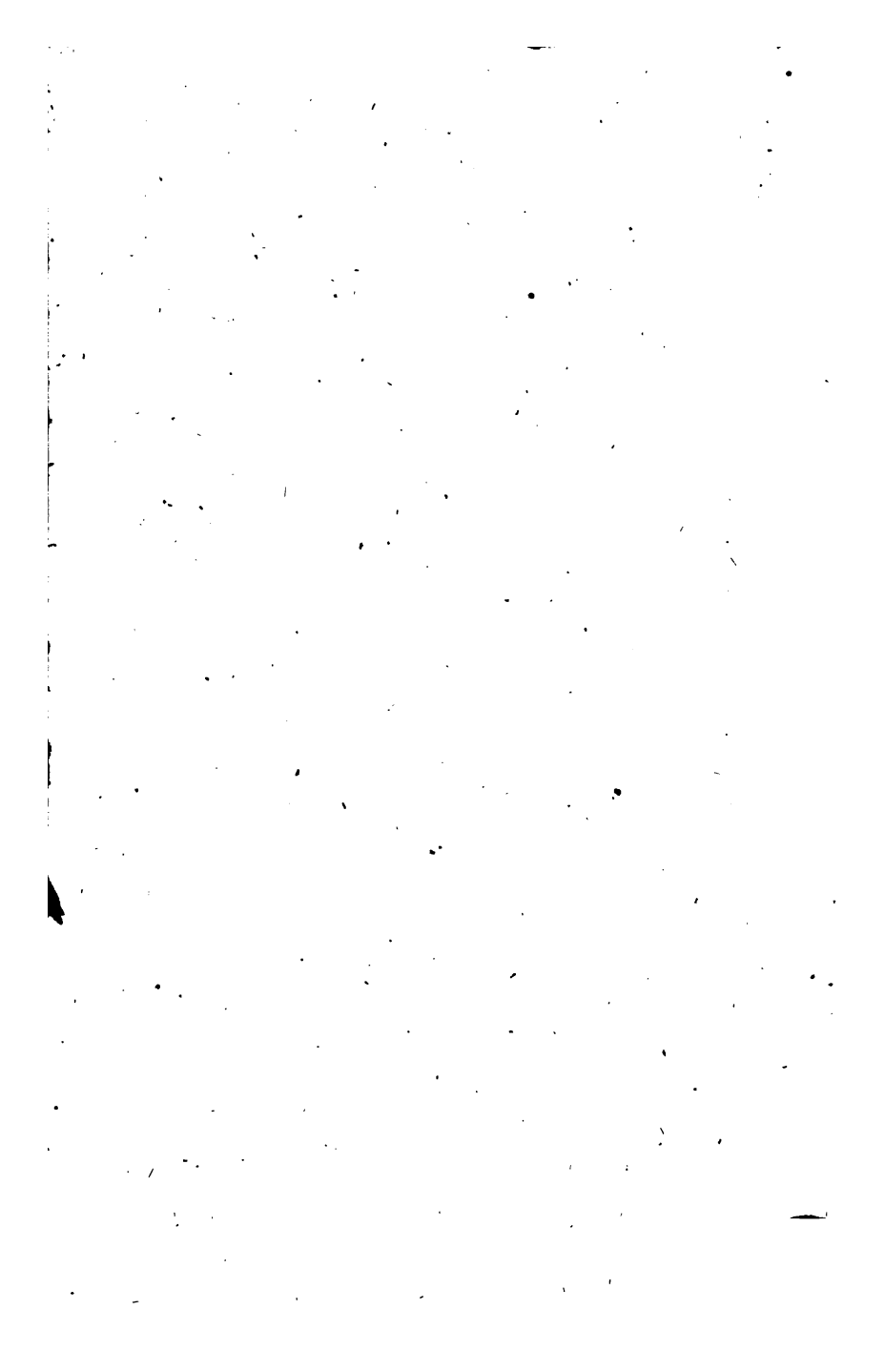
THE END.

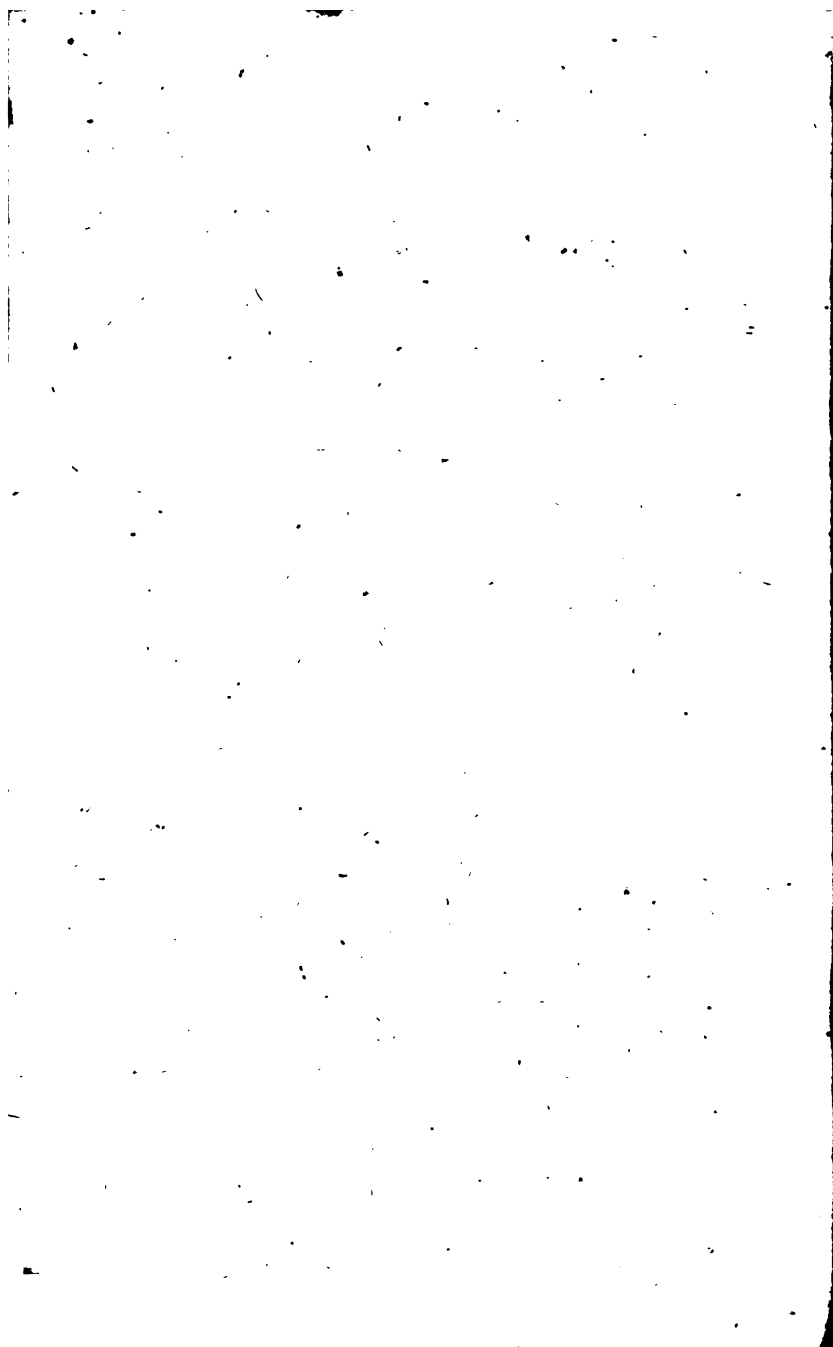














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